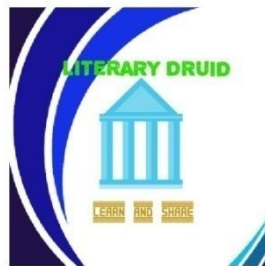


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Subalternity: Borders and Borderlands

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*Literary Druid* is an online Peer-reviewed International Journal of English Language and Literature which is committed to academic research, welcomes scholars and students all over the world who to advance their status of academic career and society by their ideas. The journal welcomes publications of quality papers on research and other mentioned forms in English Language and Literature

Research ought to be active to create a major boundary in the academic world. It must enrich the neo-theoretical frame that facilitates re-evaluation and enhancement of existing practices and thoughts. Eventually, this will effect in a primary discovery and lean-to the knowledge acquired. Research is to establish, confirm facts, reiterate previous works ant to solve issues. An active endeavor to endow rational approach to these types for educational reformations through academic research has become the focal intention of the journal. Now, we feel very proud to bring May, Volume 3, Special Issue 1, 2021 contributed by the Academicians and research Scholars of literary field at the International conference "Subalternity: Borders and Borderlands" held at JP College of Arts and Science, Ayikudy, Tenkasi- 627852. The guest editor is Mr S. Mahesraja, Assistant Professor, J P College.

**M.Vinoth Kumar & S. Kulandhaivel**  
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**Subalternity: Borders and Borderlands**  
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## Exploring the Ancient Kerala with Appunni: A Cultural Probe into M.T. Vasudevan Nair's *Naalukettu*

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### Abstract

*The research paper entitled “Exploring Ancient Kerala with Appunni: A Cultural Probe into M. T. Vasudevan Nair's Naalukettu” critically investigates the culture of a particular region in Kerala as presented by Vasudevan Nair's novel Naalukettu. Culture binds the life of every human being. The study takes to travel with the protagonist, analyses his lifestyle and explores the culture of his challenging society. It also deals with the lack of identity and the domestic violence faced by the protagonist as an inter-caste child in a culturally bound orthodox society.*

**Keywords:** Culture, Caste, Oppression, Identity crisis, Struggle, Violence.

Literature is a boon to the world which explains the culture, tradition, history of every society to their future generation. The history, geography, customs, traditions and ideas plays a major role in shaping the culture of India. Many part of the world has been influenced by the religions and traditions of India which has been created by amalgamation. Cultural studies have been originated from the two books titled, *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) by Richard Hoggart and *Culture and Society* (1958) by Raymond Williams. The establishment of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural studies by Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall in the year 1964 popularised the cultural studies. Bijay Kumar Das in one of his essay titled “Reconfiguring Cultural Studies and Postcolonialism” has quoted Punter that “Cultural Studies is a whirling and quiescent and swaying mobile which continuously repositions any participating subject.” (Das 404) It is Coleridge, Burke, Arnold, Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris wrote about the cultural issues in their society during the nineteenth century. Later, the early twentieth century writers D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, F. R. Leavis and Raymond Williams also helped in the development of cultural Studies. The word culture has been defined as the word that “refers to the beliefs, rituals and practices of a given social or ethnic group or nation” (Habib 172)

Kudallur, a small village in Kerala has been blessed by the great writer Madathil Thekkapattu Vasudevan Nair. He is a versatile writer of Malayalam literature. He has been awarded Sahithya Akademi Award in the year 1958 for his debut novel *Naalukettu*. His other works include *Manju*, *Kaalam*, *Asuravithu*, *Randamoozham*, etc. He has been awarded





Padma Bhushan (2005), Kerala Sahithya Akademi Award (1958, 1982 and 1986), Kendra Sahithya Akademi Award (1990), Njana Peedam (1995), and Padma Bhushan (2005) for his novels, short stories and dramas. *Naalukettu* has been published in the year 1958. It has been translated into English by Gita Krishnankutty. This novel has been adopted as a television film in the year 1995. A screenplay has also been released based on this novel.

Appuni is the protagonist of the novel *Naalukettu*. His mother Parukutty is from a Vadekkapet tharavad of a Nair family and his father Kondunni Nair is a Pagida player. As his mother came out of the tharavad without the permission of her parents and relatives, they made funeral rites for her. The struggle in their life started only after the death of Appunni's father. He has been poisoned by his partner Syedalikutty. Appuni has been provided scholarship by the school for his brilliance. He has a desire to return back to the tharavad. First time he has been driven out of the tharavad by valiyaamaman. The second time when he has been visited to the tharavad he has been accepted by his grandmother. Appunni has faced harassments from the society. This leads to the inferiority complex of him. Appunni's elder uncle has the full power in the tharavad. This has led to partition. Appunni after completing his school education joins an estate for job with the help of Syedalikutty. Finally, Appunni buys the tharavad from the Valiyammaman and brings his mother back to his house.

During this period, there is no freedom for women. Their words are not considered seriously and they are expected to follow the customs and traditions. Women are married as early as possible and they are considered just as a commodity. Though these women are grown up physically, their minds are just like the mind of a child. Occasionally, Malu asks silly questions to Appunni which irritates him and he doesn't respond to it. The women of the tharavad are not allowed to move out unless and until the pond in the tharavad dries up. "In summertime, the water of the bathing tank in their compound would dry up, revealing the bed of sand underneath. They were then allowed to go and bathe in the river" (30) If the elder uncle of Appunni is there in the front yard, the women should not raise their head. In the case of Parukutty, she has been engaged to a old man and she elopes with Kondunni Nair. As she eloped, her parents took a purification bath and her parents considered her to be dead.

The Caste system prevails in this society as the novel is set during the twentieth century. Though the tharavad is in debt, elder uncle of Appunni is not ready to sell the Tharavad to the people of the caste Mappillas. And Appunni's father has been hated as he drink tea in the shops of mapillas. "To make worse, Achan kept company with people of all castes. He drank tea in teashops run by mapillas..." (11) Once when Appunni went to the Yusuf's shop to buy some coconut oil, he has been thinking that he may get polluted because the shop has been crowded by the Cherumis who belongs to the low caste."Appunni made an attempt to push his way through them. It wouldn't matter if he touched the cherumi women and was polluted. He would have a bath anyway as soon as he got home." (4) And that day he immediately after returning home takes bath. This shows that even the young minds are polluted due to the caste system that prevails in the society.

These people are strong believers of myth. They believe that the snakes are very fond of sweet scents, good music and beautiful women. Because of this, Appunni is afraid to cross

the screw pine bush because, it is said that the snakes like the smell of the screw pine flowers.” They liked the scent of screwpine flowers. Sweet scents, good music, and beautiful women: these were what cobras liked. Were these good things meant only for cobras?” (3) Once, there was a small snake in the corridor of the tharavad. So, a ‘serpent thullal’ has been arranged in the tharavad. It is when Appunni first visited the tharavad and he saw to girls danced like serpent during thullal. ““Dance, dance, snakes...accept these offerings...” (51)

Padiga is a game that those people played but not the high caste people. Kondunni Nair belongs to a respectable tharavad. But as he plays Padiga and talks to all the people without considering their caste, he was not respected by the Nair. He is the best player of Padiga in his place. “Kondunni Nair had had an excellent reputation as a padiga player.” (9) He says the number just by the sound of the rolling dice. Once, he has been rewarded a dice made of bell metal for his talent. “He gifted Achan a pair of bell – metal dice weighing four pounds” (11). As Paarukutty works in the illam she has been treated mean than a dog. She eats from the leftovers of the others from the illam. Once Appunni went to the illam with his mother and he understands the struggle of his mother and he never went to the illam after. Unlike present days, those days’ people followed the old traditions and culture which was a boon to some people and a bane to some other people. At present due to modernity culture takes a new transformation. It is through the literature, the present generation are able to understand the difference between the ancient culture and present culture of Kerala.

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## Strands of Jingoism in *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

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### Abstract

*Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's maiden novel is a piece that explores the patriarchal attitude within the familial construction, due to the Western influence, in postcolonial Nigeria. Adichie combines the political situation of society with traces of the European attitude blended in the Nigerian society after independence. The paper attempts to highlight the patriarchal attitude of the central character Eugene Achike, which soundly affects the mental health of his family members. The paper further focuses on the Western mindset of Eugene, disguised in the name of culture and knowledge.*

**Keywords:** Jingoism, Violence, Domestic Life, Religion.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explicitly portrays the attainment of jingoism and chauvinism at different level in the novel *Purple Hibiscus*. Adichie also expresses how being a jingoist affects the people around them to a longer radius. Lack of assiduousness and care for a longing heart is also expressed by Adichie in the novel. The very start of jingoism begins in the house of Kambili, a fifteen years old girl, who is the narrator and Jaja who is the brother of Kambili. Jaja refuses to receive Holy Communion on a Palm Sunday. Being an extravagant Catholic, Eugene, the papa, beats Jaja for not receiving communion on a holy day. As Najeeb Washaly opines, "all these utter abuses and maltreatments are due to wrong, and often false, perception and interpretations" (2044). Everyone is supposed to be unique but Eugene suppresses once preference towards his understanding. During the quarrel Eugene throws a figurine towards Jaja in anger. Beatrice, being the wife Eugene, always wants to tolerate whatever her husband does. An individual's love towards something is being messed by others without any concern is hard and that's what mom felt here. There is no privacy given to either Jaja or Kambili, Eugene always have the key to their rooms. He always want his children to be in a scheduled routine. They are not owed to spend their time on anything other than the schedule.

Jaja and Kambili never liked the schedule but they are under the pressure of chauvinism. Even, Jaja and Kambili carry their schedule when they went to Auntie Ifeoma's house for holidays. Auntie Ifeoma is irritated by how Eugene restricts his children in whatever way he can. Auntie Ifeoma stared at the paper in Jaja's hand. Then she started to laugh so hard that she staggered, her tall body bending like a whistling pine tree on a windy day. "Eugene gave you a



schedule to follow when you're here? *Nekwanu anya*, what does that mean?" Aunty Ifeoma laughed some more before she held out her hand and asked for the sheet of paper (124).

Papa Eugene is the one who is mainly targeted as a Jingoist. Even inside the house no one is allowed to speak in their mother language. Eugene is greatly affected and influenced by the Western ideologies. Refusing the freedom of speech in mother tongue by Eugene highlights his jingoistic attitude in the domestic framework. Even Adichie portrays some bloodshed resulting from Eugene's ruthless behaviour. Once mom is pregnant, Jaja and Kambili are in extreme elation for the arrival of their new sibling. Kambili used to close her eyes and count the thuds from papa's room to understand the seriousness of the fight. One day Kambili finds unusual sound from her parents' and also the footsteps of papa which is unusual. Jaja and Kambili go out to see what happened and notice their mom is lying unconscious on papa's shoulder. They also find some bloodstains on the floor. Jaja and Kambili tend to know about the unnatural abortion of mom. This horrifying behaviour of a dad inside the house will infect a child's goodwill inside their hearts. This substandard deportment originates only because of being a man and also because of having a chauvinistic mind. Even Eugene is an active socialist; he is always authoritative towards his family. Adichie also effectively expresses how a child's mind struggles under a jingoistic crisis. Jaja is the one who always gets first in all his academic exams and Kambili fails to get first sometimes. Once Kambili gets second rank in her academic exams, Eugene takes Kambili to the school and shows the girl, Chinwe Jideze, who got first rank in that academic exam. This really insults Kambili and created a bad notion over her father.

Where is Chinwe Jideze?" Papa asked, when we got to the front of my class. A group of girls stood at the door, talking. I looked around, feeling a weight around by temples. What would Papa do?... "She is the girl in the middle," I said..."Look at her," Papa said. "How many heads does she have? (46)

Fallacy of Eugene greatly stresses the mind and body of his children. It even affected the papa Nnukwa, father of Eugene. He is an old man living in his native and also following his old traditions. As papa Nnukwu is not a Catholic, Eugene never wants to talk to him and also he won't allow his children to visit him. After some long arguments, for all Christmas he allowed his children to visit their grandfather for fifteen minutes without any physical contact or dine. He instructs that his grandfather is a devil as he follows a different religion. This breaks a great grandparent bond of love and also creates a misapprehension in the minds of the children. On that day they spent an extra five minutes with their grandfather. Once, Kambili is ruthlessly beaten by Eugene which visibly creates mental stress in Kambili.

Aunt Ifeoma's house is completely filled with laughter and happiness, even her children are always happy and they have no schedule to take care of. Within a short time papa Nnukwa is dead and both Jaja and Kambili is downhearted as they failed to share the love for the right person only because of his papa's misinterpretation. Eugene arrived only after the burial of his father and behaved like what a son shouldnt be. He just gave some money for the burial and traditional practices. Even after that Eugene was in terrible rage on Kambili and Jaja for staying with papa Nnukwu without informing him. He showed his fury by pouring hot water on their legs.



Adichie also articulates some unconscious behaviour of Eugene as a jingoistic person. Amaka, son of Ifeoma, once painted the picture of papa Nnukwu to express his painting skills. Kambili is emotionally touched by the painting and she takes the picture along with her to Enugu. One day she is filled with the thoughts of her grandfather and calls Jaja to have a look at the painting of papa Nnukwu. Unexpectedly, Eugene sees Kambili and Jaja holding the picture of the person whom he hates the most. Eugene's arrogance pumps when Kambili tries to hide the painting. He unbuckles his belt and gives her a kick with his metal buckle. Kambili feels an extreme affliction and turned unconscious.

Adichie expresses the controversial dispute between the minds of a jingoist and the typical mainstream usual people around them. She also shoots out the diverse ways, how a habitual mind around a jingoist is influenced and also the amount of struggles a teenage mind faces. Jingoism in this novel mainly becomes a stumbling block for the mind of the children. It even impacts their personal love towards anything. Adichie also shows how misinterpretation of an individual affects the people for a long radius. He is not only influenced by the tradition of the colonizer, but also the language, clothing and the culture. The mental trauma encounters by the children without any clear observation make it hard for them to survive inside the house. As a colonial product Eugene is greatly influenced by the beliefs and practices of the British, as Cheryl Stobie says, "Kambili's father Eugene is the emblematic colonised masculine subject" (424). Kambili and Jaja take new steps towards adulthood by overcoming the fear and stress caused by their father. Adichie clearly shows abundant episodes where chauvinism grasps its superfluous notion and overdone the existential crisis.

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## Deconstructing Ethical Metanarratives in George R.R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones*

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### Abstract

*Ethics is one of the dominant metanarratives that have been accepted blindly since the dawn of civilization. This paper will show how this sociocultural foundation exists in the fictional medieval world of George R.R. Martin's novel A Game of Thrones through tragic journeys of multiple characters enduring downfall due to their failed inability to reconcile their old ideologies with new perspectives. Ethical metanarratives, such as concepts of good and evil, will be critiqued from the point of view of the post-modernist methodology of deconstruction, which is an effective instrument used for dismantling hierarchies within binary systems and forces readers to critically examine centuries-old dogmatic beliefs through new glasses. The main finding of this research is to provide how universalist tendencies on ethics should be regularly questioned in society if one needs to avoid traps of injustice in the face of changing times.*

**Keywords:** Post-modernism, Deconstruction, Metanarratives, *A Game of Thrones*.

Some beliefs and ideals have always garnered more Universalist mass approval simply because of how it coincides with our familiarity with everyday experiences. Any phenomenon that comes across as unthinkable and does not match with the collective consciousness is mechanically scrutinised and tagged undesirable by all. Murder, incest and betrayal, for instance, are common atrocious acts that are criticised in our modern society. This is because society tends to enforce only those guiding beliefs—also largely referred to as ‘metanarrative’ or ‘grand narrative’—that ubiquitously appeals to the values of dominant strata of the population and confers such partisan opinions with undue legitimate power to make sure its supremacy is unchallenged at length. Thus, post-modernist creed comes into the play as it opens a discussion on ways to inspect such old ideals. In this respect, it asks questions on whether murder can be justified if it is about safeguarding one's wellbeing? If betrayal is valid if it is to assert one's survival from future harm? If incest is indeed revolting as often conceived when it is another offshoot of lust and meets the same carnal and psychological desires that non-blood relationships do?

Moral ambiguities have always existed within the overarching ethical metanarratives, which have been followed blindly since the dawn of civilization. In the fictional medieval world of George R.R. Martin's novel, *A Game of Thrones* (1996), ethics too play a significant

role and is critiqued in the following sections from standpoint of the post-modernist methodology of deconstruction, which is an effective tool for dismantling hierarchies of binary systems and forcing readers to examine centuries-old dogmatic moral and social codes through new glasses. One of the main reasons why Martin's *A Game of Thrones*—the first book of the epic fantasy series “A Song of Ice and Fire”—is popular and have sold 90 million copies worldwide (Flood) is not because it simply narrates a fantasy story on royal families and their intricate relationships and integrations of magical realist elements such as showing dragons and zombies-like creatures posing threats on humanity, but because it projects discounted binaries that have always existed within our daily lives and compel us to reevaluate these dichotomies *de novo*. In the next section, the research will thus briefly discuss the definitions of terms ‘metanarrative’ and ‘deconstruction’, the dominant ethical metanarratives that are endemic in Martin's *A Game of Thrones* and how such totalising ideals are deconstructed in this novel.

### Defining ‘Metanarrative’ and ‘Deconstruction’

To begin with, ‘metanarrative’, also referred to as ‘meta-narrative’ or ‘grand narrative’, stands for any single, overriding narrative that has greater social acceptability over other lesser narratives. To put it another way, it is the foremost operational narrative which caters to “a framework in which all other cultural narratives find their ground and acquire their meaning and legitimacy” (Winqvist and Taylor 165). The term was first coined by **Jean-François Lyotard** in his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge in which he criticised any “ideological forms of knowledge” or “narrative knowledge”* (Encyclopedia of Marxism) *that condoned to possess the only basis of truth. Few examples of metanarratives include religions like Hinduism, “Christianity, Islam and Buddhism”* (Encyclopedia of Marxism), *western philosophical paradigms such as “the Enlightenment, Capitalism”* (Winqvist and Taylor 165), “democracy”, “Greek fatalism”, “bourgeois progressivism”, “Marxist utopianism” (“Grand Narrative”), natural and social science discourses like literature and linguistics, “modern science” (Winqvist and Taylor 293), “politics, medicine, ethics, law, economics” and can even extend to “organization of ‘disciplinary societies’” like “family” (Winqvist and Taylor 373), “class, race, and sexuality” (Aguirre). These aforementioned institutes and theoretical principles primarily propagate their narratives to be universal, authentic and indisputable forms of authority and thus occupy most of the social space.

Lyotard's post-modernist approach—adopted by theorists from other academic disciplines as well—was based on the ethos of “incredulity toward metanarratives” (Lyotard xxiv). This can be largely understood as cancelling any form of “authoritarian universalizing narratives that are no longer viable” (“Grand Narrative”) and recommends developing scepticism of such systems or schemes that profess to be “in possession of ultimate truth, or criteria for determining what counts as ultimate truth” (Sim 3). Such style of scepticism is referred to in philosophy as ‘anti-foundationalism’, whereby the legitimacy of totalitarian metanarratives is probed by “asking such questions as ‘What guarantees the truth of your foundation (that is, starting point) in its turn?’” (Sim 3). This attempt of questioning of metanarratives also brought Lyotard to introduce a contrasting practice called ‘little narrative’

“(or micronarratives, *petits récits*): localized representations of restricted domains, none of which has a claim to universal truth status” (“Grand Narrative”).

Even though Lyotard defined little narratives in the context of the political field where “local intervention appears like a viable solution” (Winqvist and Taylor 230) to dissent on regional issues compared to wide-scale national authoritarian policies, this approach mainly allows the expression of “differences and complexity” (Winqvist and Taylor 231) existing in the society where manifold incompatibilities of opinions, values and ideologies are acknowledged rather than brushed aside for their lack of universality. Moreover, the celebration of little narratives does not imply “replacement of grand narratives” (Winqvist and Taylor 231), rather it is showed as an effective strategic solution to keep peremptory advances of social structures in check. The other method for leveling metanarrative is through the creative process of deconstruction.

Deconstruction is “a form of philosophical and literary analysis” (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica) that is applied in post-modernism to unmask “repressive and arbitrary hierarchies” (Winqvist and Taylor 85) that prevails within binary systems. Binary systems—also referred to as ‘binary opposition’—denote a pair of a word which is opposing and exclusionary to each other, such as speech versus writing, virtue versus vice, male versus female, heterosexual versus homosexual, white versus black, mind versus matter and so on and so forth. In every “system of thought” or culture, there exists traditionally-accepted logocentric tendency where individuals knowingly or unknowingly incline towards one of the binary couplets or dichotomous constructs more than other, which typically leads to empowering of “the singular and definitive over the multiple and indeterminate” (Sim 226) and perpetuate discrimination and inequality towards the subordinate grouping in society.

The term ‘binary opposition’ was first introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure to validate how “language is a system based on oppositional relations” (Winqvist and Taylor 36). For instance, word ‘good’ depends for its meaning in its differing word ‘bad’. Saussure believed this meaning of words or ‘signifiers’ can be implied in its entirety when we first hear them since it was assumed that connotations were inherently “present to us in our minds” (Sim 316). This supposition that the presence of meaning exists when communicating with others invited criticism from Jacques Derrida, who called it a “metaphysics of presence” that relied heavily on a certainty that language is formed with “stability of words and meanings” (Sim 222). Deconstruction, as a post-structuralist methodology, was initiated by Derrida to uncover such “textual unconscious” (Sim 222) in literary works via a creative process of ‘*difference*’, created from the French verb *differer* that implies both ‘to differ’ and ‘to defer’” (Sim 229), which highlighted how “metaphysics of presence” is an often nothing but an “illusion” and that “difference always intrudes into communication to avert the establishment of ‘presence’ or completeness of meaning” (Sim 6).

Derrida expanded the usage of metaphysics of presence to base another theory called ‘logocentrism’, which described how “the history of Western philosophy” (Sim 316), as well oriental traditions, were marked by similar illusory “metaphysical certainty” in the society and idealized certain “pre-existent reality” (Sim 226) more when facing “binary polarities”





(Winquist and Taylor 232). ‘Logocentrism’ is a Greek word which can be “best encapsulated in the biblical phrase ‘in the beginning was the Word [the *logos*]’ and depicts how cultures frequently tend to return to the impression of ‘being’ and “concomitant faith in God, the Self, and the Order of Universe”—ideals that are typically believed to be truthful and superior—which then further transmits in other forms of rational “systems of thoughts”, which too “continually strives to go back to origins, find centres, fix points of reference, certify truths, verify an author’s intentions, or locate a text’s core meaning” (Sim 226). Derrida believed that this fixation with “originary intention” was so deeply rooted in “Western thinking, as well as in language” that it became significant to question such conventions that deemed certain facets to be more valued than other and were later promoting discrimination towards those who believed the contrary (Sim 226).

Deconstruction, therefore, permitted a scope through which “to expose, reverse and dismantle binary oppositions with their hierarchies of values” which too had a predisposition to support one ideology or concept at expense of the other (Sim 222). Deconstruction further allowed deliberation of the grand narratives that considered it to be greater and only legitimate source of truth, automatically negating lesser narratives based on rights it obtained since the time of its being. For instance, institutes like monarchy find “their right to rule depends not on their relationship with the people, but on their relationship with the divine” (Strathern). By contending such metanarratives that spin around claims of rightfulness and universality, deconstruction becomes an active political, philosophical and literary tool that emphasises “inconsistencies, inequalities, or hierarchies which are expounded or glossed over either by a text, by a whole discourse, or even by an entire system of beliefs” (Sim 222).

### Discussion

This section discusses the common ethical metanarratives that are central in George R.R. Martin’s *A Game of Thrones* in order to elaborate how deconstruction is a vital tool in this day and age and is applied often to evade any unforeseen repercussions that come along with believing in seemingly innocuous yet totalizing ideologies. Ethics is one of the key important metanarratives that is specifically dealt with in this section in a bid to recognize how modern society is undergoing a wave of post-modernist skepticism whereby moral ideals are questioned and deconstructed than accepted at face value.

#### Ethics

Ethics is an intricate concept to explain as it covers diverse connotations to each person who deals with it. In academic discipline, it denotes “any system or theory of moral values or principles” (Singer). In short, it denotes to morally correct or incorrect actions that individuals adopt to maximize happiness and prosperity in their lives. However, most ethical metanarratives never point out the ultimate source of authority which decides what are the “standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues” (Velasquez, Andre and Shanks). For few, this source could be founded on their personal experience that revolves around what is right and wrong and for others, it could emanate from their religious organization, their faith in governing law system of their country or the conventional norms



accepted in society which predominantly describes how they outline their ethics values. Moral and social codes, such as justice, chivalry, naivety, scrupulousness, valour and rightfulness, are subjected to diverse interpretations and yet several subsidiaries of the ethical metanarratives are approved without much deliberation based on its universal appeal. For instance, any individual that carries virtuous traits such as honesty is often regarded with reverence, while those who lie and fall to the vice side are quickly condemned for their appalling decisions.

This attitude to engage in extremes came because of modernism, whereby invariable principles such as good versus evil were usually delineated into distinct classes, and any contest regarding the blurred lines between them was understood as insignificant. During the advent of post-modernism was when the false sense of optimism was finally discarded, moral ambiguity was recognized and nihilism and corruptibility were explored as common realities of the ending years of twentieth century. It was the outcome of the era being dominated by technology that now translated into “atomic bomb”, “materialism” which suggested “consumer culture of insidious influence”, modern suburbia instigated feelings of void and “alienation” and the idea of “civilization”— which had already been nullified after the First World War—was once again pushed to the fringes as the western culture witnessed the Second World War that further disillusioned their confidence in government or any authorial figures (Matz 129). Deviating from the principles of modernism became paramount as the post-modernist era experienced an extreme loss in all types of ideological beliefs that they held prized until that time.

Writers such as George R.R. Martin are ostensible about their growing disenchantment with modernist ethical idealisms that are strongly reflected in the novel, *A Game of Thrones* (1996), which is widely identified for its “rich world building, narrative twists and turns, and gritty descriptions of the human struggle for power” (Brown) and vengeance while equally containing explicit gory details on war, death, filial loss, vicious murders, betrayals and intense scenes of sexual brutality. Readers can perceive Martin’s embitterment towards moral prescriptions through journeys of multiple characters undergoing tragic downfall even if they act scrupulous. For instance, Eddard ‘Ned’ Stark is one of the finest, upstanding characters in *A Game of Thrones* who succumbs to death due to his very virtues. Being a valiant and loyal patriarch of the northern states of the Seven Kingdoms, Ned is initially invited to stand by his duty to his king and beloved friend, Robert Baratheon, to assist as the new ‘Hand of the King’ after the former advisor, Jon Arryn, dies under mysterious circumstances. After Ned is appointed, he begins his investigation of Jon Arryn’s death and during its course finds out that Robert’s wife, Queen Cersei, is involved in an incestuous relationship with her twin brother, Jamie Lannister. Moreover, he figures out that Joffrey, Tommen and Myrcella, Robert’s children, are not the rightful heirs to the throne as presumed by all. However, Ned’s puts the final nail in his coffin when, in an act of sheer inanity, he reveals to Cersei about being aware of her secret in hopes that she may seek forgiveness and apologise for her infidelity.



In turn, Cersei instructs her cousin to keep serving wine to Robert during a hunting spree that sufficiently inebriates him to be gored by a boar, eventually causing him to succumb to his wounds before Ned could divulge her truth. Ned once again shows his gullibility by encouraging Petyr Baelish—a former friend of his wife—to join the rebellion against Joffrey’s right to the throne to also find Petyr exposing his plans to the Queen. Ned is subsequently charged with treason and imprisoned; however, later he is offered a deal to secure his daughters’ lives if he publicly confesses his crime. Ned accepts the offer and lies to all but is beheaded by Joffrey’s headsman towards the end. Martin’s denouement to Ned’s character is often known to stagger readers as it subverts the usual fantasy trope, which often expands on the plot of peace and prosperity disrupting at first to be later established by the protagonist in whom he/she conquers the evil through their explicit act of bravery and goodness. This is one of most conventional formulae applied in fantasy stories whereby the protagonist (usually a white male character) succeeds in overriding the wicked as they carry essential traits of righteousness, generosity and supreme valour that by some odd means qualifies them to thrive in their schemes, irrespective of how ominous and unfavourable the situation could pan out in reality.

Such examples can be noticed in works of Martin’s contemporaries like Christopher Paolini’s “The Inheritance Cycle”, where the main protagonist, Eragon, is a good-hearted teenager who succeeds in overpowering the sinful King Galbatorix with the help of his dragon, Saphira. In Robert Jordan’s “Wheel of Time”, there are three youngsters, Rand al’Thor, Matrim Cauthon and Perrin Aybara, who fight against the Dark One’s Forces to only imprison him in the end. While in J.K Rowling’s “Harry Potter” series, the young Potter is the chosen kid who kills the Dark Lord Voldemort using the magical powers he learned from a wizardry school. As noted in these fantasy novels, it is normally a sympathetic youngster who suffers plenty of setbacks in their quest, yet none of these events is big enough to stop them from defeating the evil force since they are fundamentally guaranteed invincibility and happily-ever-after in the climax of the novel all due to their apparent good-heartedness. However, Martin’s uniqueness in writing can be seen in the manner he subverts such hackneyed fantasy motifs by fashioning storylines that are utterly unpredictable and show characters that suffer heart-rending defeats regardless of their good or bad action, such as the unforeseeable killing of Ned Stark who succumbs to death despite walking down the right path.

By unravelling Ned’s tragic downfall, Martin reflects importance of deconstructing ethical metanarratives that imposes persistent reliance on ideologies than encouraging nature of enquiry of its apparent authenticity. Ned’s quixotic beliefs on morality are what led him to act merciful towards the Queen, even when he was aware that her egoistical character and irrefutable love for her children would push her to any extreme to defend and protect them. He refused to observe the dangerous consequences of blindly following his idealistic tendencies and continued with his old ideologies of scrupulousness without realising the undercurrent realities of the era he lived in, which ultimately triggered Robert’s demise, his incarceration and the decisive failure of the Stark family. However, the author does not



establish that virtues are ineffectual and wickedness is the sole *modus operandi* through which to sustain one's place in today's corrupted world. By exposing and dismantling perils of single narratives, Martin mostly verifies the importance of probing validity of stereotypical ethics to preserve one's place in the world where traits like Ned's honesty is shown to cost him his life while Queen's guile and Joffrey's sadism is rewarded with them, at last, securing their right to the throne.

It is not mere virtues that are exposed as problematic in Martin's *A Game of Thrones*. Readers are also introduced to how vice is often illustrated and perceived in the society through a glimpse into the lives of the soldiers of the Night's Watch, Martin's fictional military order that is responsible for manning the Wall which barricades the north and rest of the Seven Kingdoms from an invasion of wildlings and supernatural villainous beings. In this subplot, the author reflects the journey of Ned's illegitimate son, Jon Snow, who joins the Night's Watch after being inspired by his uncle but receives a rude awakening when he realises the prestigious organisation is no more respected. Instead, it is a dwindling force that functions as an exiled colony for unwanted social outcasts like "sullen peasants, debtors, poachers, rapers, thieves, and bastards" (Martin 128) alike. Nevertheless, it is this band of degenerates that prove their allegiance to the kingdom in the end by undergoing hunting missions to cease the looming assaults of the 'Others' (heinous zombie-like creatures who were previously humans before being transformed into immortal beings). Among them, subsidiary characters such as Samwell (a stout scholar who is ridiculed for his weight and cowardliness), Grenn (a burly yet slow-witted orphan) and Pyp (a singer wrongly accused of thieving), who were often ostracized due to their apparent lack of mettle and social status, were people who turned to be most empathetic towards Jon during his times of hardship—particularly when he contemplated abandoning his duties to join his step-brother Robb's army to battle against the Queen's family—and likewise succeeded by displaying their loyalty and hard-work and securing high-ranking positions within the Watch.

Jon equally undergoes a notable transformation as he turns more receptive to his peers by training them at swordsmanship and later inspiring them to find a place in the world. By evolving into a practical, strong leader, Jon sheds his bigoted realities on knighthood and classism and develops more acceptance towards the discriminated subordinate grouping in society. It is his capability to question the legitimacy of his learnt ideologies and rethink the values on what qualifies virtues and vice that assists him later in surviving among the Watch's delinquents. Thus, Martin using grey characters, like Jon's and the brothers of Night's Watch, explains to the readers of the typical ethical deficiencies which cannot be critiqued at face value to judge someone's true merit and instead encourages to develop more receptibility of such morally ambiguous traits. Questioning the authenticity of ethics are important, be it ideals of virtues or vice, so that such indisputable behaviours could be reviewed and properly deconstructed in time before its universalising perceptions blind one from seeing the actuality of life.

However, as aforementioned, Martin does not publicise that the evil characters like Queen Cersei, Joffrey or even the others (villainous immortal beings) are superior and have a



good fortune due to their Machiavellian manoeuvres and viciousness. Alternately, he reinforces the presence of opposing construct in the binary couplet that is often unheeded and treated as negligible, which more than usually results in negative upshots for those who are oblivious to its occurrence. An apt example of this can be observed in the novel's prologue where Ser Royce's unfortunate death at the cruel hands of Others is vividly portrayed after he haughtily disregards the cautions of his experienced rangers. What is indeed interesting is how Martin, despite painting others as fearful and alien beings, depicts their brutal mannerisms similar to disdain reflected amongst his human characters. A resemblance can be observed in how Ser Royce mocks Gared over his ill-fated accident and how Others later ridicule Ser Royce as they brutally slash him to death:

Gared pulled back his hood, giving Ser Waymar a good long at the stumps where his ears had been. "Two ears, three toes, and the little finger off my left hand. I got off light. We found my brother frozen at his watch, with a smile on his face." Ser Waymar shrugged. "You ought to dress more warmly, Gared ... Royce went to his knees, shrieking, and covered his eyes. Blood welled between his fingers. The watchers moved forward together, as if some signal had been given. Swords rose and fell, all in a deathly silence. It was cold butchery. The pale blades sliced through ringmail as if it were silk. Will closed his eyes. Far beneath him, he heard their voices and laughter sharp as icicles. (Martin 15-21)

As Gerard Collin explains in "The Postmodernization of the Ghost Figure in Twentieth Century North American Fictions", this is due to the prevalent "spirit of normalization" whereby objects of fear have begun materializing into "nearly humans" and produce an "ever-decreasing gap between ourselves and which we have long perceived as other". Although Gerard Collins concentrates on ghostly characters in the post-modern era, one can equate the same analogy of "dubiety regarding the phantoms"—in our case the humanoid monsters called the Others—reducing with time as "uncertainty about former adversaries is increasingly giving way to an understanding of multiplicity in supposed others" (Collin).

By accepting the multiplicity amongst beings, Martin establishes a post-modern universe where chaos is being embraced as normal and characters like the Others are reflected as "mirrors to ourselves and yet exterior to us at the same time" (Collin). Therefore, the common dichotomy such as good and evil, which were once deemed as two separate foundational truths, are now being accepted as interchangeable realities, and ambiguity is being acknowledged as the defining status quo of the ongoing era. Through showing the tragic downfalls of characters who chase romantic ideals of yesteryears and attempt to recreate the lost power structures, Martin establishes the necessity for accepting the new perspectives of old ideologies than resorting them to ensure their survival is not affected throughout the ups and downs of changing times.

### Conclusion

As observed through examples in *A Game of Thrones*, deconstruction, therefore, poses to be a significant exercise in educating us on what happens when we believe in





generalizing ideals without reflecting on opposing binary groups that exist and burgeon in society at the same time. By showing the journeys of characters who were strictly good and virtuous, Martin redefines the catastrophic repercussions of believing in single, totalising narratives. Similarly, he demonstrates need for unboxing people from social classification that deem them evil based on their acquired lifestyle and circumstances. Through highlighting this discriminatory practice of blindly assuming “traditionally informed, organized and ranked Western thinking” (Sim 222) without careful deliberation—where one concept is unseeingly supported more than other, such as virtues are regarded more with deference compared to vice deeds without realizing they are often two sides of the same coin—Martin enables readers to cultivate a strong rejection of imposing metanarratives and denunciate binary-way of thinking. He, thus, encourages readers to celebrate deviations in ethics as part of natural occurrences and not pursue ways to formalize norms based on their universal sensibilities but on how they simultaneously accommodate contradictory realities in society.

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## Puppet Play of a Woman: A Character Study of Ponna from *One Part Woman*

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### Abstract

*Culture, Tradition and family are exceptional words to every ordinary uneducated Indian. Every person lives according to the systems and rules created by these systems have their special provisions to man and woman separately. A typical Indian woman is made up of the culture and the circumstances in which she lives. She has to follow all the unwritten rules of religion, family, society culture, etc. and what she really is and what she wants to be is an unquestionable fact. Ponna like other women of the time born and brought up in a patriarchal system to married off to Kali. As a typical Indian woman, she acts according to the instructions of others. What she really is and wants to be are unaware to Ponna herself. She has to face all the troubles and curses of other people for their childlessness than Kali, because of her incapable womb. A childless mother is a curse, whereas for a father it can be solved with a second marriage. Ponna used to act according to society even in her personal matters, that's why she has to face all the burdens of rituals. Kali is not bothered about all the insults casts on them due to their childlessness. Everybody accused her of incapacity to bear a child. As a typical orthodox woman, she can't think about life beyond all the customs. When the big mouths of the society come out with the solution for her childlessness she is ready to do all such things despite her likes and desires. Even the completion of the chariot festival cannot help Ponna to declare her true self.*

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, Childlessness, Womanhood, Culture and Society.

Society is an ample term comprising all the systems, religion, caste, spirituality, ritual, gender and others which determine the role of an individual. The so called inhabitants of the system intentionally or unintentionally follow the rules and regulations to act upon. The tradition, custom and religion of a society do not give the freedom to live as the individual like; the so called systems are made by a few to thrust upon a majority. This reading is an attempt to find how the society is trying to influence upon the lives of people, especially the case of women, even in their personal issues. The people are not liberated to think apart from the rigid conceptions of the culture therefore they are victimized within it. In this light the novel *One Part Woman* by Perumal Murugan is taken and examined to investigate the plight of citizens in a culturally oriented, genderly defined, superstitious, and caste biased society, especially the women characters to show how they are marginalized to be act like a dumb. It





also focuses on how the characters like Ponna and Kali are made to be the victims by following all the rules and regulations of the social order.

Perumal Murugan, the Tamil novelist, writer and activist critically comments on how the immoral, superstitious and caste biased community is negatively foreshadowing upon the ordinary lives and make them to play like puppets, in his renowned novel *One Part woman*. Perumal Murugan is a luminary of contemporary Tamil literature, having garnered both critical acclaim and commercial success for his work. An award winning writer, poet and scholar, he has written several books, novels, short story collections, poetry anthologies and works of nonfiction. Some of his novels have been translated into English to immense acclaim like *Seasons of the Palm* which was shortlisted for the Kiriya Prize in 2005.

The novel, *One Part Woman*, pictures precisely the plight of the two central characters Kali and Ponna. They are living in a small farming community in the Kongu region in south India. Even after twelve years exquisite relationship they are unable to conceive a child, and it becomes a source of constant taunts from family members and fellow villagers, who variously attribute it to family curses, god's wrath, or their ancestor's ill behavior. The community plays a major role in life of every individual. They expect certain features from each character. These external pressures include religious, cultural and social values which promote feelings of guilt and failure among the two characters.

The present study is an attempt to find out why Ponna is turned to be puppet like plaything of the society? Why women are too much protected as a possession? Can't a woman take her own ways to live her life? Why a woman becomes another woman's enemy? Despite of protecting each other why they themselves become the tools of patriarchy? All these questions can be answered by analyzing the character of Ponna and her female counterparts. Women are always treated as inferior to man and the same attitude is also seen in the novel. What is unfortunate is that even women don't know the consequence of freedom; they like to live under the protection of males, whom they have considered as their 'gods'. As suggested by Elizabeth Jackson:

...it is the female body's capacity for birth that makes women crucial to the preservation of a particular community's integrity and purity. In addition, women's responsibility for the organization of the home and the socialisation of children makes them crucial in cultural – as well as biological – reproduction. For this reason, cultural control over women is fundamental to the continuity of tradition and community identity. However 'tradition', and women's place in it, is constantly being contested, reinvented and reinterpreted, and a number of scholars have analysed processes of 'redescribing women' in redefining national and other community identities. (16)

Ponna is always described either as the wife of Kali or as the sister of Muthu. She likes to be submissive to Kali and a world beyond the hands of Kali is unimaginable to her. Like the words of Virginia Woolf "a woman must have money and a room of her own" (4) not to write fiction but to prove herself. Ponna lacks a personal space and money to create a world of her own to be independent and courageous. As Ponna's mother remarks about Ponna's gratitude to Kali as: "As if you have some wonder of a husband that no one else has!



Even if he moves his finger a little bit, you ran and stand in front of him. That's right. My husband is a wonder for me. . . Even if I give birth to ten children, he will always be my first child" (Murugan 46). She is born and brought up in a culturally tuned society. A female has to live under the burden of fixed female identity and her failure to beget a baby results in the oppression and repression of her individual self. She shows her predicament by comparing herself to the mute creature cow that is more proficient in bringing small calves into the barn of kali. In a similar way, Ponna expresses her predicament to one of the ladies: "The plant I planted is flowering now, the tree I planted is bearing fruit, the calf I brought has grown and given birth to many of its own, and the egg that I helped to incubate has hatched a beautiful chick" (101). This stigma of barrenness turns down even the soul of Ponna. The whole novels centers on the question of unproductiveness and how it affects Ponna.

When the society takes charge of the existence of people issues like childlessness is converted into a dilemma of women, and for a man it can be solved with a second marriage. Chellappan, who dealt with cattle, comes to the barnyard as one of Kali's cows had failed to yield a calf despite two or three meeting attempts and he wanted to get rid of the cow by selling it to Chellappan. He says: "It is fate, mapillai that is just how some cows are. No matter what you do, they never get pregnant. Just quietly change the cow. If you say yes, I can fetch you one right away" (14). He is making an indirect reference to Ponna and hinting at a second marriage to Kali comparing her to an infertile cow. This was a defining characteristic of the couple which made them ridicule in their community. The taboo attached to infertility is also seen in the practices and customs that the community follows. Marriage becomes the association of two bodies for producing children. When Kali meets his friend Bommidi Mani after a long time during the festival the first thing that Mani asked is: "Do you have children?... Mani smacked himself on the head to express his sympathy with Kali's fate and said, 'Get married again'" (24).

Traditional or folk medicines and treatments try out through women along with blame, abandonment, social isolation and impoverishment. Ponna's mother-in-law kept a watch on Ponna's menstrual cycle in every month. As soon as it came to pass, she told Ponna to drink the juice of shoots in the morning of the third day. She said "don't eat anything else even by mistake. The juice will be better. You will have to close your eyes and swallow it" (43). After that Ponna got used to such methods. She is ready to face every hardship to give an heir to Kali.

Even if her male partner is an iconoclast women are unidentified. Nallayan is a rebellious man who does everything as he wishes disregarding the social bonds. He starts living with a woman who is not his wife and she started saying she wishes a taali around her neck and a child by him. He got her earrings and this and that and kept her like a queen. But apparently all that was not good enough for her. She wants only a taali, a promise from a man or a more protection. He thought the desire would go away soon. But she would not let him touch her without tying a taali round her neck. He is not willing to take responsibility over her. He only needs physical relation with her. She lost her individual identity before society. There is no value for her desires and opinions. When she approaches to attain her wants, he



hits her and gave her the sari she came in and chased her away. Women is always subjugated in culture even if her man against all the social stigmas. Nallayan never follows any customs but he cannot glimpse a woman as his equivalent.

The culture wants woman to be obedient and weak but Murugan is succeeded in creating character like Kali's mother as a thrash on the so called femininity. Kali's mother is portrayed as a widow in white dress to suit the preset scenario of the society but she plays as a counterpart to Ponna, the only woman pictured as different from other women, a bold, independent, successful and courageous woman. One year she could not find anyone to sow the seed and without considering the so called status of a widow she has cultivated her own land without seeking help from anyone. Everybody said that "Nothing would grow when sown by a woman in white" (10), undoubtedly referring to her widow's attire. Nothing untoward happened; her yield was as good as anyone else's. She made sure no one had the chance to say that a child raised by a widow would amount to nothing. The day Kali grew strong enough to carry the basket, she handed it to him. She was there to help him until he learnt the skill of sowing evenly, but after that it became his responsibility. When men are matured enough, they are responsible for all family, property, community and all other work associated things.

Women are always treated as a thing to be protected. Society often considered women's body and beauty more important than their identity. Kali is tensed about what will happen to Ponna's body if she delivered a baby and she became looking exhausted and unwell, especially from fatigue worry or suffering. A woman's body is her own issue but here Kali is more worried about it than Ponna, may be the changes will create a lack of attraction, causing limits to his physical pleasures. Ponna used to dress well as the way Kali likes. So the question of who is the actual possessor of the body arises with the behaviors of Kali and Ponna. The property rights of a woman's body is not the case of Kali alone the entire male are alike. Ponna's father is very dominating and he gives many instructions to Ponna and her mother before they leave to the marketplace on the Chariot Festival. He asks his wife to cover her breast properly, upsetting the contact of others. He keeps repeating to them that they should be very careful when they went into the crowd. He thinks that women cannot manage themselves when they are in the crowd. Society tends to teach women that they are physically and mentally weak.

Ponna and Kali followed every ritual very accurately and executed whatever they could to please the god for an heir. The hardships of the rituals and offerings turned to be easy in front of Ponna's determinism. The only thing Ponna need is a baby. "In the matter of offering prayers, Kali and Ponna left no stone unturned. They did not discriminate between small and big temples. They promised an offering to every god they encountered" (47).

Women used to perform according to predetermined roles and they themselves become the tools of patriarchy to use against other women. The newly married wife of Mandayan becomes notorious because of the envious actions of another woman. Apart from the bonding between women they accuse each other in order to strengthen the rules of patriarchy. Women are unconscious of all these inherent structures and they themselves



become the tools of men to shape other women. Kattahayi is a new young bride and living with her husband in Kali's village by making spring toddy. Pazhani is doing similar work in the adjacent plot of land. Pazhani's wife is a troublemaker, who believes that their business is not going to flourish as long as and Kattahayi and her husband Mandayan long around. So Pazhani's wife has started to making insinuations and hurling indirect abuse against Kattahayi. She spreads rumours linking Kattahayi with each of her customers. Some people like this and have no problem in leading vulgarisms and spread rumours about a woman. Women make themselves as their own enemy unknowingly, a kind of victimization.

Ponna is also made to be a victim of such womanly annoyance due to her barrenness. Superstitious believes add colour to such allegations. On an occasion when Ponna and Kali were called for the celebration of one of their niece's puberty attained celebration Ponna is kept away by the other women. The accomplishment of womanhood is celebrated, which means the girl is capable for bearing children and look after their family. Woman is seen in the angle of reproduction only, where Ponna is a cursed woman because she cannot conceive a child therefore others forbid her from performing rituals. Ponna and Kali take part in that function, where Ponna carries one of the nine plates in the possession, because it was the convention for the uncle's wives to do so. There was a custom meant to ward off the evil eye for that all the aunts are called. Fearing of the curses Ponna herself keeps away from that and she is called to perform that. "But when she tucked in her pallu and went forward, Chellama's brother's wife dragged her aside and said, 'You stay away.' If a childless woman did the ritual, would it make the girl barren? Was she that inauspicious?" (99). In such a culture the word woman becomes meaningful only if she can conceive a child, otherwise the barren woman is an outcast to the culture.

Sarasa's children used to come to Ponna's house and Ponna likes to eat them with what they need. It's for the chatter of their voice filled in those walls. But even her friend Sarasa has failed to understand the mind of Ponna, whom she accused as: "Despite me telling you to come early, you are arriving only now. Did you get delayed in getting your daughters ready? She was showing off that she had children while Ponna didn't" (65).

The people are mainly depends on farming and Ponna is made as an annoyance for her actions in farming also. In the months of Vaigasi or Aadi, depending on when the rains arrived, they would grow the groundnuts. They used to plough the land in the order of preference, based on the soil and its moisture content. Every woman assists their males by sprinkling water in the ploughed furrow and by lifting the seed baskets. On that year the climate was not fair and Ponna helped them by lifting the basket while they are working in Thangavel's field. Originally she was asked to sprinkle water but carry out this because Tangavel's wife came down with severe leg pain. Thangavel did not get a good yield like the previous times and the finger pointed towards Ponna herself as: "That barren woman ran up and down carrying seeds. How do you expect them to grow once she has touched them?" (109).

The novel points out to the superstitions of people in every action. They have even celebrated the momentary gifts which they got as part of a performance as a fortunate thing



for their further living. "Women who received a lemon in their laps were blessed with children. Ponna too received a lemon in her lap. She did that every time the Punnadayan story was sung in the village. But nothing happened" (186), the trust over things beyond reality is visualized everywhere in the novel.

Kali's grandmother narrated him the myth of Goddess Pavatha. It is clear that even the myth of women is not liberated from the cruelties of men. According to the myth Pavatha was a tribal girl whom four young men raped and killed. It was also believed that the tribal girl's curse haunted even those families that dared to associate with them: "Pavatha, our goddess who resides up in that hill, will seek justice from those who did this to her. No girl child has ever born to their families. Even the male children shall grow up to be impotent and die young. This curse of the tribal girl persisted till today. That was why no girl child had been born in this lineage. Even those that were born had died in a day or two. The men, too, had truncated lives. Kali's grandmother narrated all this and launched into a dirge" (26). The only female sound that is raised back to all humiliations is the curse of Pavatha. The generations of men can't learn their lessons even from the curse and still they try to assault women mentally and physically.

Culturally oriented society also injects the poison of untouchability in people. Two beautiful children of Maran, whom Ponna glimpses on her way to chariot festival, urge the motherly emotions in her but she can't even cosset them due to their lower caste. The one sitting on the father's lap must have been eight years old, wearing a small kandangi cloth torn from a sari around her waist. The other one, sitting naked on her mother's lap, must have only been three. Ponna felt like keeping the baby on her lap. But caste laws forbade her from touching the child. She refrained from even playing with caste children, since she feared some rebuke or comment. When Kali and Muthu have an intercourse with Mandayan, they come to know that Kathayi is pregnant with their third child, whom Kali is asked to adopt even without considering the caste: "Just give me the child that is going to be born. I will raise it" (199). Mandayan is promised it to Kali but Katthayi is not agreed to that. Here caste worked as the obstacle to donate child. "Katthayi rushed out of the hut in anger and said to her husband, 'will you eat shit when you are drunk?... Think before you speak! If they heard us, his relatives will come here to beat us to pulp. Let him find a child from among his relatives'" (199).

Women are asked to follow the systems unquestioning, whereas man can live according to their desires. The life of Nallayan perfectly illustrates this argument. But even Nallayan fails to protect the identity of women. Kali and Muthu used to roam around to find out some hidings. For Muthu "Man always needs such places" (40).

Kali's mother has suggested the chariot festival as a solution to their problem. "All men who set their foot in Thiruchengode on the fourteenth day are gods. It is god who is giving this. It is not a problem if we keep our mind on god" (92). Even if Kali himself has taken part in the festival years ago as a god, he cannot think sending Ponna there as a solution. "In the first year, when his body was ready to get to know a woman's, he was overcome with shyness and he escaped from all the women and hid under a bullock cart. . .





By the following year's festival, Kali had gained enough experience" (95). Man can undertake those festivals for enjoyment, but their women are not allowed such things even if they are performing as part of a ritual. Kali knows the Chariot festival 'very well' and Ponna is ready, without full heartedly, to give an heir to Kali. She says: "If you want me to go for the sake of this wretched child, I will. His hold around her relaxed. This was not the answer he had expected" (104).

Ponna's need to bear a child puts their loving marriage at stake as Kali doesn't want her to participate in the Chariot festival and have intercourse with other man, whom he fear might be an untouchable. If Ponna gets pregnant, it will question Kali's so called 'masculinity' and his impotency. On the other hand, Ponna's 'female essence' is often cross examined; she needs to get pregnant in order to prove her female essence and also to give an heir and thereby upholding their status and power.

Ponna takes part in the Chariot festival with the belief that Kali has given his full heart permission for that. Ponna always worried that "The plant that we plant grows; the seed that we sow blooms; is it only me who is the wasted land here?" (171), and all such encroaching feelings lead her to take part in the festival. It becomes a turning point to Ponna as if it liberates her from all the bounds.

She felt that, just like the wheel of the chariot, she had abandoned what she was accustomed to and was standing firmly in what was new. She had a sudden desire to run and jump amidst the crowd. She wanted to explode into laughter. There was nothing to stop her here. She could do anything she wanted to. She yearned to see the whole of Tiruchengode in one long run. She should control herself. She thought she could absorb nothing if she lost her balance. (206)

The only time Ponna takes her own decision is in choosing a god. Many have approached her, but in any of them she can't find her god. Actually she was searching for a face and body similar to Kali. Even in choosing a god she prefers the presence of Kali. She feels the presence of a man near her. "The folded dhoti and the towel that was around his neck and fell over his chest made him look like no one she knew... It occurred to her that this was her god" (207). The god takes her through the crowd and feeds hot puttu. She felt as if she is taken to another world. The new name, "Selvi" also converts her identity along with the name. The new experience transformed Ponna to a new woman, who is free from all the shackles of the society.

Kali and Ponna adore each other affectionately. Ponna live her life swearing the words of Kali and other big mouths of the society. But hairlessness made her to choose another man as part of the ritual. In an uneducated Indian society any women can't live a life of her own, if so she will be out casted. Society needs everyone, especially women to be submissive and obedient. Ponna obeys others, but more than a ritual or festival she could attain a self of her own, which will be a mistake in the eyes of Kali. Women should protect one other, that's why Ponna's mother takes her to the festival and the only thing that a woman could do in a patriarchal society is to build her own world within the limits. *One Part Woman*, the title itself proves the importance of equality of man and woman, they are the



inseparable entities. The novel critically points out the predesigned roles of women and with that they are asked to play their whole life as puppets.

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## Kannaki and the Changing Concepts of Femininity

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### Abstract

*Cilapattikaram is a Tamil epic estimated to be written in the 5th century. The protagonist of the poem Kannaki is significant in the South Indian political and social scenarios. Cilapattikaram has been adapted into movies and plays several times and it garnered much popularity. In the present popular discourse, the ideas associated with Kannaki include 'pathivrathyam', 'karpu' and the power of laypeople. The idea of Kannaki plays a significant role in the definition of femininity of modern Tamil and Malayali women. Kannaki has a major presence in the subaltern as well. Different communities associate with her and their story of Kannaki is often discarded. It is interesting to see how a protagonist of an epic and subsequent related myths has such a major role to play in the notion of womanhood has been formulated, and how this then fits within the concepts/practice of patriarchal and larger political framework. The changes the myth's significance has undergone over time shows the definition and redefinitions of the myth of Kannaki in extension, expectation from a woman in the twentieth and twenty-first century. These versions and definitions and the subaltern version of Kannaki story make the topic wider and diverse. This diversity of the Kannaki myth, including the feminist and subaltern readings, can make the myth prominent in different periods and would add to its meanings and significance.*

**Keywords:** *Cilapattikaram*, Kannaki, Femininity, Popular culture, Karpu, Tamil, Malayali.

### Introduction

The paper will be a discussion about how the patriarchal norms defining the identity of the female adapts in different periods while maintaining its essential oppressive core. The popular concepts and values surrounding Kannaki from *Cilapattikaram* will be taken as an example for the same. The concept of ideal women has changed over the nineteenth and twentieth century. Similarly, this concept underwent a rapid change in Tamil Nadu. Anti-colonial struggle, religious reformation and social reformation attempt has influenced the formulation of female identity. But the questions of rights of women and justice for women were often addressed by male with little input by women. It can be assumed that what women should be was a decision made by male leaders of the society and despite their progressive ideas the relapsing patriarchal ideologies made its way into feminine identity.

*Cilapattikaram* is a Tamil poem written by Ilango Adikal. The exact date of composition is debated because there are scholars who say it was composed in 500-800 C.E. (Obeyesekere, 1984, p. 3) and some say it was composed in fifth century C.E. (Parthasarathy,



1993, p. 6) The plot of *Cilapattikaram* is quite famous yet I would like to offer a brief summary. The story begins in the Chola country with the marriage of Kovalan and Kannaki. Soon after their marriage Kovalan abandons Kannaki for Madhavi a courtesan and Kannaki waits for her husband's return. Kovalan suspects that Madhavi is betraying him with another man and promptly leaves her. He was penniless when he returned to Kannaki and offers her anklets to him. Kannaki and Kovalam goes to Madurai and their journey is described in detail. They reach Madurai the capital of the Pandya kingdom to start afresh and Kovalan goes to pawn one anklet of Kannaki. But the goldsmith who found that the anklet is similar to that of the Queen Kopuramdevi and decides to steal it and put the blame on Kovalan. He reports to the King that Kovalan is thief who stole the queen's anklet and the king, without further thought beheaded Kovalan. Hearing this news, Kannaki furiously walks around the streets of Madurai explaining the injustice she just faced and goes to the royal court to prove her husband's innocence. When she shows her anklet and proves that the King made a mistake, the king and the queen dies of shock. She asks the God Agni to burn the whole city down, rips off her breast and roams around the city. She travels to the Chera country where she ascends into heaven and this is witnessed by some tribes. On hearing this, Cheran Chenkuttuvan as per the instructions of his advisers decides to get a stone from Ganga and worships her as Goddess Pattini. King Gajabahu from Lanka also gets interested in this the story of Kannaki and adopts this faith.

### **Popularity of *Cilappatikaram***

Popularity of Kannaki and *Cilapattikaram* is evident in Tamil Nadu. The statue of Kannaki at the Marina Beach and the party offices of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) is one quick example that comes to mind. The story of *Cilapattikaram* was adapted into movies and plays multiple times and many of them were very financially successful. "This story, titled 'Kovalan', was a popular stage play before movies talked. And, as a talkie it has been filmed more than once in Tamil, in 1933, 1934, 1942 and 1964 and also in Telugu in 1942. The most popular and successful version of them all was this film Kannagi" (Rangadorai, 2009). The Malayalam movie *Kodungalluramma* (1964) and the Tamil movie *Poompuhar* (1964) was also based on this story. Samhita Arni's novel *The Prince* (2019), Kandathil Sebastian's *Dolmens in the Nilgiri Hills* (2013), Jeyamohan's *Korravai* (2005) and R Murukavel's *Milir Kal* are few of the many novels that borrows from the plot of *Cilapattikaram*. Besides Amarchitrakathas, paintings and serials have been made depicting the story of *Cilappatikaram*.

The depiction of Kannaki in each of these movies and novels are indeed interesting. In *Kodungalluramma*, we find Kannaki a wife who loves doing the household chores and addresses her husband as God. Contrary to the *Cilapattikaram*, Madhavi is shown as a selfish cruel seductress who abandons Kovalan once he is poor. In *Cilapattikaram*, Kovalan leaves by his free will, Madhavi gives birth to Kovalan's child and he abandons both of them though he knew about the child. In *Kannagi* she is an avatar of the Goddess Shakthi and she takes the avatar of Kannaki to prove she was more powerful than Lord Shiva. In the end, she is terrified by the destruction of Madurai and goes back to Kailasa and finds solace with Lord

Shiva. In *Poompuhar*, Kannaki's unwavering love to Kovalan is celebrated with songs and scenes showing her pining for her husband. In the novel, *Dolmens in the Nilgiri Hills* Kannaki is a tribal woman who becomes a Naxalite because her husband was killed by a powerful family who owned their lands illegally. But eventually she feels sorry for her violent actions and decides to serve the family who was responsible for her husband's death.

### **Karpu, Tamil and Kannaki**

The idea of karpu is quite complicated- it involves love and submission to husband, virginity till her marriage and loyalty to one's husband even after death. This can be roughly translated as chastity or purity. The idea of pathivratyam comes close to karpu. Kannaki is popularly known as 'kappukkarasi' i.e. the queen of karpu. This phrase is etched on her statue in Marina beach and on the statue the translation for karppukkarasi is 'perfection of chastity'. In this case, more than anything, Kannaki's karpu was celebrated and taken as an ideal.

Karpu became the most important source of power for a woman. A woman with karpu, like Kannaki, should not be wronged, because injustice to her can bring ruin. The most unfair ideas would be that a widow's remarriage would be a loss of karpu. (periyar reference) Another extremely regressive idea associated with karpu is that raped woman would no longer have karpu- rape was/is referred as karpazhikkal (destruction of karpu) (Pandian J. , Goddess Kannagi: A Dominant Symbol in Tamil Society, 2017).

The ideal of the purity of Tamil language was often equated with that of the purity of Tamil women and here Kannaki's myth had a prominent role. The removal of Sanskrit and Hindi elements from Tamil was a goal of Tamil revivalists and this was associated with purity or the language. Tamil language became a Goddess, Mother Tamil, *Tamil tai*-a woman (Ramaswamy S. , 1997, p. 3). And a woman's purity got associated with chastity. When it got associated to Kannaki, a popular icon among Tamils, it got translated to the impure elements of Sanskrit, Hindi and English and make her pure, and chaste- chaste like Kannaki. As Jacob Pandian says:

The most fundamental principle involved in the symbol of Kannagi is that it enables believers to associate chastity with politics and ethnicity.... The goddess represents female chastity and spirituality, but functions as a dominant symbol to orient the Tamils to their heritage of justice and to sustain linguistic and cultural purity (Pandian J. , Goddess Kannagi: A Dominant Symbol in Tamil Society, 2017, p. 181).

### **The Modern Tamil Woman and Idealisation of Kannaki**

It would be wrong to say women did not play any role in the freedom struggle or reformation movements of Tamil Nadu. Tamil women had a major role against in the Tani Tamil Iyakkam"An army of women consisting of a motley crowd of housewives, intellectuals authors and professionals assembled in front of the Theological High school in Madras. The women raised slogans like 'Down with English' and Down with Hindi' and 'Tamizh Vazhga...' (Ramaswamy, 1998, p. 61). The presence of women in Self- Respect Movement is evident from the number of women who became party members of Justice Party. But the contradiction is regarding how many women had a say in the reformation of women and to what extent was the feminist movement allowed.

Achalambikari who was a prolific Tamil writer, who was well versed in English and Hindi argued that women should confine themselves to primary education imparted in Tamil. Her opposition to English education in particular and women's higher education in general was grounded in patriarchal logic. She and another writer Kumudini, writing in 1940s argued that western education rendered Tamil women unfit to be housewives and that the function of education to be provided through Tamil should be to make Tamil women ideal mothers and wives (Ramaswamy, 1998, p. 67).

The idea of education for women and voting rights for women were accepted by majority of the political parties but even progressive parties could not imagine a woman as a person who could have an identity beyond her family and household. She should be educated so that she can be a better wife and mother, not because it would give her more power. This is not an idea found in Tamil Nadu alone. From Rousseau to Ram Mohan Roy, there were many philosophers who advocated separate education for men and women so that they can perform well within the limits of their gender roles. Even when it comes to literature, there were works that women were not supposed to read, because it would corrupt their minds. Neelambikai Ammaiyar, a leading Tamil linguist, translator and Dravidian activist writes in *Muppenmanigal Valaru*, "Women should not be permitted to read texts like, *Alli Arasanikkovai Pavalakkodi Malai*, *Eni Etram* etc. which may lead them into bad ways. They do not only read such texts day and night but also read books (Brahmanical Sanskrit texts) like *Kaivalya Navaneetam* which are false doctrines" (Ramaswamy V. , 1998, p. 78). It is quite ironic considering that Sangam poems addressed female sexuality and desire in depth while she considered literature with erotic content has Sanskrit roots.

In Tamil Nadu, the ideal wife trope borrowed a lot from the Kannaki myth. Like Kannaki from *Cilappatikaram*, she is expected to be of few words and be happy to be identified as a wife, mother, daughter or sister. She was able to burn down a city and possess such terrible power because of her devotion to her husband. So in the modern context, the idea became that, it is not that a woman cannot have power, but to possess that power she should be chaste and loyal to her husband, because her source of power is *karpu*. Like Kannaki, her role is to be a wife- that is her identity which must not be taken lightly, by her and the society. She is expected to quietly suffer the injustice and extra marital affairs but she would get furious the moment her household is threatened. But even such expressions of power can be destructive and irrational, because Kannaki sought revenge on the whole city. So keeping the power under control was important. Even today the heroines of Tamil films are seen observing the ideal qualities of *acham*, *vekkam*, *madam*, *payarppu* (roughly translated as fear, shyness, innocence and chastity) all of the qualities which are embodied in Kannaki.

The case of Bharathanatyam shows how the image of Indian woman or Tamil woman was framed. The reinvention of Sathirattam, the dance practiced by Devadasis, was reinvented by the Tamil danseuse Rukmini Devi Arundale, as Bharathanatyam, as a classical dance which could represent India. This process of reinvention was to make it less erotic

which might find some parts of it unacceptable and immoral. “The art form was also de-commercialised because there was a desperate attempt to erase its devadasi history. Eroticism was cleansed and the content of dance became almost wholly devotional.... there was a perilous pressure to uphold the image of a “good woman” in choreographies” (Sengupta, 2018).

Similarly, out of the many female characters in Tamil classical literature, the one fictional character who has a statue and a museum for her happens to be Kannaki, precisely because she fits in the modern ideal Indian/Tamil woman. She is a woman with dignity because of her status as a wife, a woman who has power but is willing to keep it under control, the happy wife willing to go unto any levels to save her marriage, the chaste woman who still has power and a sense of justice.

Another example for the idealization of Kannaki is her presence in school level textbooks. In TNBSE syllabus, while teaching about exemplary women in the history of Tamil Nadu for Class 5 students, Avvaiyar is given more importance than Kannaki according to the studies conducted by V Geetha. But in TNBSE Class 10 Tamil text book there is a lesson in which a brother advises his sister how to be an ideal woman and Kannaki is given great focus here. “The brother commends his sister’s married status and notes how he never thought that the mischievous careless girl he knew would grow up to be such a good, caring and responsible housewife. He however thinks she should not rest on her status, and, instead, seek to cultivate her mind. He recommends that she reads: old classics, like the *Silappadikaram*, which tells of the virtues of the chaste Kannagi, and modern texts that tell of achieving women, such as the life of Marie Curie” (Geetha & Selvam, 2012) The history texts in CBSE introduce *Cilappatikaram* and Sangam poetry as examples of the culture that existed in South India. Sixth standard Tamil textbooks contain portions of Canto 1 of the Book of Pukar, the song of Praise introducing the Chola king. The current syllabus of TNBSE tenth standard Tamil textbook, include Canto 5, describing Madhavi’s dance. In the eleventh standard text, one finds Canto 23 where Kannaki goes to Pandiya king to ask about her husband’s death.

### **Opposition towards Kannaki and *Cilappatikaram***

But the idealization of Kannaki and *karpu* was not taken in without opposition. One of the people who clearly opposed the idealization of Kannaki and the concept of *karpu* was E.V. Ramaswamy, more popularly known as Periyar. He mocked *Cilappatikaram* starts with adultery and ends with stupidity. As a person who valued self-esteem, he said, is she had any dignity and self-respect, she would have given up on Kovalan (Pandian, Anandhi, & Venkatachalapathy, 1991).

Periyar supported divorce, remarriage and opposed *karpu* because it enslaved women. The idea that opposed these was *karpu* and Kannaki embodied the ideal woman that opposed these. She forgave her husband when he betrayed her. Even Periyar said she should have divorced him. She literally worshipped him and felt her life was over without Kovalan. His death deprived her of her existence. She raves through the city of Madurai, gets a vision of her husband, and ‘she collapsed on the ground and clasped the precious feet of her husband



with both hands Radiant with bangles...” (Parthasarathy, 1993, p. 180). In the court of Pandiyan, when she introduces herself as a woman from Pukar, the wife of Kovalan, who is the son of Macuttuvan (Parthasarathy, 1993, p. 188). This shows how she defined herself and the following passage shows how she accepted widowhood as her fate:

Like the unhappy women who keep painful vows  
After their dear husbands vanished in the pyre,  
Must I suffer and be ruined  
Because I lost my husband through the fault  
Of a king despised by his own people (Parthasarathy, 1993, p. 180).

She destroys the city and goes to the Chera country with a vow that she will not rest till she finds her husband. On the fourteenth day, she meets her husband and is ascended to heaven. Madhavi, the lover of Kovalan, is abandoned by Kovalan, though he knew she was with child and later she gives birth to Manimekalai. She gives up the life of a courtesan and becomes a nun. After giving birth to the child, she gives up her life like a pathivratha woman was expected to do.

Thus, it is clear why Periyar opposed these ideas. He found it outrageous that karpu is expected from women and not men and karpu is the sole virtue expected of women. He considered karpu as an Aryan concept. “In Aryan context, karpu translates to pativrata which enslaves women. In my opinion, karpu is inspired by the pathivrata concept. This instructs women to consider husbands as Gods, and thus women becomes slaves while their husbands become their masters” (Ramaswamy E. V., 1928, p. 208).

Another opposition to deification of Kannaki came from V K Subramaniya samiyar. He asks if a poem that encourages women to be submissive to get justice be something that makes Tamilians proud (Subramanyaswamiyar, 1951, p. 21). He also asks if Kannaki, even as fictional character has done anything for Tamilakam and it is unfair to prioritize over poetesses like Kakaipadanaiyar, Ponmutayar, Vennikuthiyar, Adimangaiyyar and Avvaiyar who contributed to Tamil literature (Subramanyaswamiyar, 1951, p. 21).

### **The not so Popular Stories about Kannaki**

The oral literature about Kannaki vary from place to place, community to community and the Kannaki we encounter there is totally different from the one we see in the poem. The stories of the subaltern groups about Kannaki present a totally different picture about her. Kannaki becomes a woman who can protect, avenge, organize a war and instruct a community to create a particular lifestyle. Two of the many stories about Kannaki found among subaltern groups will be discussed here.

For instance, the Muthuvan community living in Kerala-Tamil Nadu border areas believes they migrated from Tamil Nadu to Kerala. Muthuvan community believes they carried Kannaki on their backs (muthuku means back in Malayalam) and thus earned the name Muthuvan (Manjusha, 2013). In their stories, the Pandiyan king is depicted as a villain character and his defeat was celebrated by the good people of Madurai. Further she instructs the Muthuvans how to live in the new settlements.





“The Muthuvans and Kannagi entered the Western Ghats. Deep in the forest, Kannagi instructed them to stop. There she founded their society. She said to them, "Live in the jungle with unity. Treat each other as brothers and sisters. Together, use the resources of jungle to live." She instructed them as to how to organize their first settlement and how to build their first building. How to weave leaves to make roofs. She showed the women how to tie their saris in such a way as to carry their young just as they had carried her. Then Kannagi went inside the first structure and disappeared” (Miller, 1991).

In the thottam paattu and mudippurappattu tradition in Southern Kerala, we find Kannaki as an avatar of Goddess Shakthi. She was born from the third eye of Shiva and she is given to a couple who prayed for a child. She is a woman with power and voice unlike Kannaki in *Cilappattikaram*. When her husband is killed she goes to resurrect him and wages a war against the Pandiya king with the help of Lord Shiva's army. She destroys the villages of goldsmiths. The story insists she is a virgin, but it is not her virginity or devotion to her husband that makes her powerful. The language used in this song is a mixture of Tamil and Malayalam and is still sung in temples in Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram. But these are orally taught songs often performed by lower castes and tribes and hence do not receive much popularity (Namboothiri, 2016)

### Conclusion

It is not my intent to argue that the less popular versions of Kannaki were the true stories which was later twisted by the patriarchal system. Nor it is my intention to say the subaltern narratives were progressive or feminist. The conclusion drawn here is to the fact that despite the overt political attempt to modernize a society and ensure rights to women, women still end up as the defined entities. The models are chosen for them and the traits of the model which are supposed to be inspiring are the ones that agrees with the patriarchal norms.

The story of Kannaki and the expectations from Tamil woman were not taken made considering the opinions of lower castes or lower caste women and hence their concepts and stories, much like their existence, remained marginalised. But they are very much the part of our society and including their ideas in the ever evolving concepts of feminine would make the myth more relateable and open to progressive ideas. The story of Kannaki would be incomplete without including the many stories and versions about Kannaki popular among smaller groups, often the underrepresented less privileged groups. By including those stories, the ideas about Kannaki become more wholesome. It becomes relevant to more progressive times else it might be discarded as a prop used to inculcate patriarchal values.

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## Struggle and Self-Realization in Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces Of Night*

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### Abstract

*This paper focuses on the theme of Struggle and Self-Realization in Githa Hariharan's "The Thousand Faces of Night". Githa Hariharan belongs to the new generation of Indian writers who have earned greater visibility and readership for Indian English Literature. She was awarded Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1993 for her debut novel The Thousand Faces of Night (1992). Githa Hariharan's "The Thousand Faces of Night" revolves around the story of the lives of the three women Devi, Sita and Mayamma. This theme is revealed through the protagonist Devi. Though she completes her education abroad she remains her traditional background. In her childhood, she listened to many stories from her grandmother. From her grandmother's stories, she realizes that there are no heroines in life, only wives and mothers. Their journey towards identity crisis leads them to realize themselves. Self-Realization depicts the protagonists' life journey.*

**Keywords:** Self-realization, Suffering, Struggle, New identity.

Indian writing in English has acquired a great significance in recent years, not only in India but all over the world. A large number of Indians use the English language as a medium of creative expression. The contribution of Indian women writers especially novelists is really remarkable. Indian Fiction in English has been the most powerful form of literary expression. It has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English Literature.

The early Indian novels in English and the regional languages, under the influence of the myths of the patriarchal society depicted women in the mythical model. These mythical stories were designed to condition woman to her different roles in her family as daughter, wife and mother. In 18<sup>th</sup> century novels focused on the portrayal of woman in literature. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the beginnings of a new trend. The first Indian English novel was written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* portrayed the sufferings and miseries of the Indian women. All novels focused mainly on the sufferings and sacrifices in the society and in the family.

Indian women writing have focused on the man-woman relationship to describe, analyze and define the Indian women's identity. The first generation of women writers recreated and retold the destiny of Indian women resigned to their condition in a patriarchal society. The recent writers like Anita Desai, Gita Mehta, Shoba De, Uma Vasudev have



stressed on the pleasures rather than sufferings of the woman's condition. Their writing retains the man-woman relationship as the pivot of narration. Their women succeed in carving an identity for themselves, defying societal expectations and emerging intact after a cathartic experience, but this self-representation is achieved with reference to the male.

In Indian society the position of woman has always been paradoxical. She has been the key mother figure in the family who is to be revered, but she has still been forced to live a life of slavery, suffering and subjugation. This image of woman is discernible in the works of earlier writers like R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand.

The new growth of self-confidence and self-assertion is perceptible in the women characters of these new writers like Shashi Deshpande, Gita Hariharan, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Raji Narasimhan and Bharati Mukherjee. Their women characters attempt to strive and true to their selves. The existential struggle of these women illustrates the emergence of the new woman on Indian literary scene. Their women live not merely as a wife, daughter or mother but also as an individual in her own right. The women characters in novels started getting more attention. Women writers like Kamala Das, Anita Desai, Manju Kapur and Shashi Deshpande depicted the woman as an individual, not merely as a member of the family and tried to bring out the conflicts in her mind. Gita Hariharan entered this exclusive group of writers with her first novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*.

Githa Hariharan belongs to the new generation of Indian writers who have earned greater visibility and readership for Indian English Literature. She was born in 1954 in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. She grew up in Bombay and Manila, and from there she moved to the USA, where she continued her studies and also worked for television channels. After returning to India in 1979, she worked in Mumbai, Chennai and New Delhi, initially as an editor in a publishing house, and later as a freelancer. Now she is working in the faculty of Jamia Millia University, New Delhi as a writer in residence. Hariharan began her writing fiction at the age of thirty.

Githa Hariharan's fiction has been translated into a number of languages including French, Italian, Spanish, German, Dutch, Greek, Urdu and Vietnamese; her essays and fiction have also been included in anthologies such as Salman Rushdie. She wrote a monthly column for many years on different aspects of culture and their political and social underpinnings, in *The Telegraph*, Kolkata. As a writer she is preoccupied with human condition. She chooses a small space for almost all her novels but endeavors to enlarge the limited space to such an extent that it becomes an elaborate presentation of human condition.

Githa Hariharan writes five novels and short stories. All her five novels and two books of short stories encompass a variety of themes, although women's lives, storytelling as an articulation of women's silences and her vehement attack on fundamentalism and communalism form the basics of her thematic range. Her emphasis on the articulation of silences and gaps in the lives of her characters, especially women corresponds to her engagement with telling other people's stories. These stories emerge from the closed recesses of the consciousness of the characters whose voice and presence has been invisible. In telling other people's stories Hariharan finds an opportunity to give chance to alternative voices.



Memory and fantasy play a vital role in storytelling. *The Thousand Faces of Night*, *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* and *When Dreams Travel* deals with memory. *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* is conspicuous for both memory and fantasy. The fables in the novel are largely based on fantasy. But her later novels such as *In Times of Siege* and *Fugitive Histories* grapple with medieval and modern history, with communalism and prejudice at their centre respectively.

The thematic range of Hariharan's novels might be limited or narrow but she manages to achieve her goal. She deals with pain, suffering, loss, power, domination and cruelty. She perceives the feelings of compassion and tenderness as a sure remedy to loss. This is apparent from the reading of her novels. Hariharan is aware of writing in English and in Indian languages. Hariharan's emphasis on the articulation of silences and gaps in the lives of her characters especially women corresponds to her engagement with telling other peoples' stories. From these stories she finds an opportunity to narrate the life of varied people to the readers.

The present paper entitled "Struggle and Self-Realization in Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night*". The novel describes women's struggle and expression of their individuality in the male dominated society. It probes into the problem of women at various levels in the society. Women writers and the women characters to get a new identity they go on their own path. Their journey to the identity at last leads them to the theme of self-realization. Self-realization is to understand or accept the situation around the characters. To define identity the protagonist struggles and failed within the frame work of the male oriented social structures as a wife in an arranged marriage or even as a rebellious lover and finally returns to her mother.

Githa Hariharan's debut novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992) for which she was awarded Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1993. The novel exemplifies the multiple existences of Indian women in all its complexities. The whole story of the novel is mostly for Devi, who returns from a broad minded environment and who suddenly involves in traditions and ritual surrounding. In her adolescence Devi had listened stories from her grandmother which were drawn from the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. Hariharan attaches significance to these mythical stories because from that Indian women draw their role models which focus on pride, chastity, destiny and self-sacrifice. According to Devi's grandmother, Devi is the goddess of a house and she is destined to be accompanied by her good luck in any place she goes. But everything turns out to be the opposite on her part. She takes a flight from all the difficult matters. Later on, she begins to understand that all the female folks- they may be goddesses, princesses or even a common woman, they are forced to bear with difficult situations.

Gita Hariharan has deliberately incorporated the stories of mythical women such as Gandhari, Kunti, Sita, Amba and so on to demonstrate the nature and extent of the influence of myths on the lives of human beings. *The Thousand Faces of Night* fuses myth and fiction to portray a world in which women who are obliged to play male-scripted roles in the society and the family rebel against oppression and injustice and assert freedom, self-dignity and distinct female identity. Hariharan has tried to show how the protagonist imagines herself as a



mythical princess, strays from the sanctity of domestic life, experiences disillusionment, and finally awakes to set her feet firmly on the realistic grounds.

Indian women are always expected to follow the figure of Sita, Savitri and Gandhari. But the noticeable point is that these ideal women existed only in epic, they were princesses and queens and were much far from the pains and sufferings of the woman in the modern world who doesn't even have an identity of her own. She lives for others and breathes for others. In Indian English fiction women are the silent sufferers and up holder of the tradition and traditional values of family and society has undergone a great change and is no longer presented as a passive character. Women are depicted as an affectionate mother and dutiful wife and servant of their husbands. The female protagonists of the Indian novels are mostly educated, but they are caged within the limits of a traditional society. Their education leads them to think independently. They struggle between tradition and modernity.

The novel begins with Devi's return to Madras from America to live with Sita her mother. Devi is the central and inspiring character. She completes her higher education in America. In America, she had a relationship with the black man named Dan. He even made a marriage proposal to her but she rejects because she realizes her family background which is against to marry another religion. Devi's mother makes sure that Devi's friends were all from good Brahmin families. Her mother calls her to come back to India especially for her marriage. Though she studies in America, she respects her traditional customs and values and always remains her cultural consciousness. Her love for her mother makes her come back to India. Though she was influenced by the modernistic ideas but for her mother wishes she accepts arranged marriage.

In the patriarchal societies, girls are trained in ideal womanhood right from the beginning. This is part of growing as a woman in India. Mothers teach their daughters the womanly qualities. Marriage has always been sacred in India. The role and duty of wives to protect this bond, even if the man is unfaithful towards his wife, it is her duty to bear him, tolerate him and give him support and bliss. It is a traditional family so they decide Swayamvara for Devi's marriage. Devi's mind was instilled by her grandmother's stories, she imagined about a Swayamvara. In Swayamvara, a girl can choose a person on her own. After meeting with five or six bridegrooms, Devi chooses Mahesh as her life partner because she likes his frankness. Mahesh is a regional manager in a multinational company that makes detergents and toothpastes. He stayed with the family members only for ten days a month and the other days he was away from home. Devi accepts his honest. Devi thought that he wants a woman at home to be a wife and a mother to him.

Devi was not prepared for her marriage she accepts it for her mother's wishes. She thought that she chooses an honest man. But after her marriage, she thought that her marriage to a much admired man, Mahesh. He never shares his business matters to her. He never allows her to go to job or learn anything. He came home at least once in a month. Devi lives like a stranger in her own house. His father only gave company to her. Baba tells her quotations in Sanskrit. So she tells him that she wants to learn Sanskrit but he said that it is foolish and the English translation is enough.



Mahesh wants Devi to attend to his father, himself, to manage the housework and to receive his friends well. Mahesh, like all other men of Indian society wants his wife to be a proper wife. Devi's expectations from her husband Mahesh to support her, to endure and understand her on equal grounds never get realized. Even in the house he is busy in his business but he wants a baby. But he is tired in waiting for a baby for no reason and he insists her on having a baby as soon as possible. She does not seem to crave for motherhood. He waits for the news of pregnancy but always heard that there is no news.

Childlessness can leave a woman utterly powerless. It takes a downright chauvinist Mahesh for Devi to be awakened to her own inner need for self-realization. He suggests her to go to the hospital for check up. But Devi is not successful in spite of numerous efforts. Devi wants her life would be protective but Mahesh doesn't care for her. She later understands that she has been unprepared for this phase of life. Devi considers that the total negligence and indifference of Mahesh's attitude is the reason for the failure of her marital life. He goes on tour and travels for weeks together on his business and she longs for his love and affection.

Githa Harihan portrays Devi as a typical Indian wife. She keeps on waiting for him and always remains lonely. Waiting for him turns her life meaningless. The women had no freedom to leave their husband's house or to go back and they had to continue to suffer till destiny took over. In a society where men were convinced that after marriage, the women's services are for the husband, in-laws and the children. Indian culture teaches and trains women to compromise and to sacrifice personal desire for the welfare of the family. For Mahesh marriage is just another necessary milestone of life. Companionship, emotional bonding and intimacy are missing from their relationship and this gives loneliness to Devi. Mahesh is unable to provide her with emotional stability and security. So she decides to leave the house of Mahesh. Her behavior shows that a marriage bond will have meaning only if there is mutual love and respect. Otherwise it would be a mechanical existence. From her grandmother's stories Devi create an image of marriage and life but which is lacks in her real life she moves from them. She always remembers her own cultural and traditional background. So, she sacrifices, cares and endures and trying to adjust initially. Later, She realizes that there is no point in continuing her meaningless life with Mahesh and decides to return home and begin life a fresh. She is confident to survive on her own strength. Survival is the highest ideal struggle for every woman in their life.

On the rebound she enters into a relationship with Gopal, a man of music. He is warm and affectionate and to some extent he is able to provide Devi what Mahesh failed. While Mahesh is having a month-long tour, Devi receives an invitation from one of her neighbours to meet a singer, Gopal. He is a forty years old man. Devi thinks that Gopal's music can help her forget the bitter experiences of life. The music of Gopal is a symbolic call for confrontation of oneself. Devi believes that Gopal could provide all excitement. After Gopal comes into her life she feels her suppressed dreams leap into flames and she walks out of wedlock courageously. Gopal considers her as his inspiration and supports for his life. She is





happy with Gopal because her happiness is concern. He takes her with his concert tours, shares his professional plans with her. She is gradually drawn to the music of Gopal

Despite of this entire Devi feels alienated because she feels she does not belong to his world. Even with him she soon realizes that it was just an infatuation. He is like a dancing peacock too engrossed with himself. There is lack of mental and emotional incompatibility in both her relations which disrupts the bonding tie. Though she belongs to the traditional background she cannot do something that can match up with the mythical women. Gopal can only fulfill her temptations. Gopal turns out to be a flirt with ambitions of an aristocratic way of life. Devi is disappointed and then she decides to leave Gopal as she had earlier left Mahesh.

Finally Devi makes a choice of coming back to her mother to start a new life. At the end of the novel, the soft sound of the veena played by her mother. The inviting call of veena to Devi suggests new relationship with her mother. Sita symbolically welcomes her daughter. It is a sign of confidence and a feeling of the youthful days by removing the traces of the past and welcoming the present for constructing a future.

In the title of the novel, a significant word, 'night' symbolizes the life of females because their sufferings and sacrifices and 'Thousand Faces' through the description of different female characters with their different types of sufferings. It is shown that the females take birth on this earth only to do sacrifices for others especially for their male relatives. The manner life cannot be judged in advance. The protagonist Devi encounters the problem of alienation, footlessness and identity crisis.

In a very distinct manner, the novelist gives an image of the dangerous situations of wives in our country, India. The fundamental concern here is the incapability of emotions of the Indian husbands and lack of concern of the mental state of their wives. Gita Hariharan's main purpose is to make the readers especially the males aware of having a thought and feeling of knowing their partners thoroughly. She also discusses how a woman is generally considered to be in India.

The mythological stories provide a powerful link between generations of women. The protagonist struggles all through her life. She was running away from America, the house on Jacaranda Road, Mahesh and Gopal. She had been living as a weak woman. She has allowed others to treat her as a puppet and they pulled her strings. She realizes that she has made very few choices in her life to write off the male scripts. Devi returns to give her love to her mother. At the final part of the story she controls herself and she mentally prepares herself to face the challenges of life with the help of her mother Sita. As a responsible mother she performs all her duties and responsibilities and she is even ready to welcome her daughter again.

In Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* Devi, from her life journey she get many experiences, failures, identity crisis and the realization of self. Her self-realization is linked with her desire to represent things in her way, to construct her own language and her own expression. She struggles and suffers in her entire life. To create a positive identity she has to look for a different order of meaning in the colorful garden of female imaginary. This





is symbolically represented by her re-entry into her mother's garden. The lack of emotion from her husband which makes her to feel loneliness and her mother's welcoming music back to her home makes her time for self-realization.

From her grandmother's stories of the heroic women, self-sacrificing heroines and women turns to men, Devi realizes that she can relate neither to the aggressive model nor to be the benevolent model of femininity. Devi creates a different destiny for herself as she seeks to find a renewed meaning to her relationship with her mother. Sita who has been urging Devi to view life her way and conform is in search of new ways. There can be as many routes to self-realization as there are people who follow their own way not limiting the experience. Sita, renewing her long lost relationship with her discarded veena is a significant step towards inner healing. The inviting call of veena that Devi hears suggests renewal of a new, positive relationship with the self and the daughter and the renewal of life itself. The end of the novel marks the beginning of such a meaningful joint pursuit with separate independent goals and values.

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## The Evolution of the Feministic Desire

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### Abstract

*Hermeneutics refers to the formulation of the principles of interpretation that apply specifically to the bible. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it reflects the theory of interpretation in general. It involves getting at the meaning of all written texts, including legal, historical, and literary texts. Dilthey claims that a reader is able to achieve an objective interpretation of an author's expressed meaning. The result of the evolution of feminism is the commencement of women's empowerment. For its development, the literature is the suitable path. The feminist children's literature is like fertile soil to expect the apt response. It points to the female experience and how it helps to expand and change the world. Cynthia Kadohata, a Japanese American writer leaves an attempt on feminism and women's empowerment in her works. It shines in her novel "The Thing about Luck", which won National Book Award in 2013. Through hermeneutic perspectives, "The Thing about Luck" brings out the suffering and challenges of women. It shows the first victory of women empowerment.*

**Keywords:** Women workers, Empowerment, Decision making, Self interest, Culture.

Feminist Literature is to speak out the political, economical, and social inequality of the sexes. It is an organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests. It is against gender stereotypes and gender based expectations. It reflects the system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it. It speaks against the literature where historically presented as objects seen from a male perspective. The goal is to develop and uncover a female tradition of writing. It is to interpret symbolism of women's writing so that it will not be lost or ignored by the male perspective. It uses to analyze women writers and their writings from a female perspective. It views the awareness of the sexual politics of language and literature.

Cynthia Kadohata was born on July 2, 1956. She is a Japanese American Children's writer. She is well known for children's and young adult novels. Her popular works are *Kira-Kira* and *The Thing about Luck*. *Kira-Kira* won the Newbery Medal in 2005. *The Thing about Luck* won the National Book Award in Young People's Literature in 2013. Her first short story got published in The New Yorker in 1986. Her works are *The Floating World* (1989); *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* (1992); *The Glass Mountains* (1995); *Kira-Kira* (2004); *Weedflower* (2006); *Cracker! The Best Dog in Vietnam* (2007); *Outside Beauty* (2008); *A Million Shades of Gray* (2010); *The Thing About Luck* (2013); *Half a World Away*



(2014); *Checked* (2018); *A Place to Belong* (2019). The New York Times praises *The Floating World* as “beautiful, clean yet lyrical prose”. Natalie Whetzel argues that *Kira-Kira* as “creates a masterpiece of specific moments entwined in emotions. This novel has the ability to inspire the reader to remember what it is to live with the heart of a child”. Hazel Rochman applauds *Kira-Kira* as “the real story I in the small details, never self-consciously ‘poetic’ but tense with family drama. In her first novel for young people, Kadohata stays true to the child’s viewpoint in plain, beautiful prose that can barely contain the passionate feelings”.

The story *The Thing about Luck* appears with the negative tone of the protagonist, Summer. She is a twelve year old girl desires good luck and feels they are cursed with bad luck. The journey of the protagonist commence with pessimistic perspective. Her whole family works under Parker’s Harvesting Company. Summer works with her maternal grandmother Obaachan, a cook and grandfather Jiichan, a combine driver. Summer’s younger brother, Jaz accompanies them who suffer with invisibility. Summer views the luck, “The thing about luck is that it’s like a fever. You can take fever meds and lie in bed and drink chicken broth and sleep seventeen hours in a row, but basically your fever will break, when it wants to break” (2). Her comparison shows her thirst of luck in her life. It portrays the life of a girl is not only her choice, but also the opinion of her surroundings.

When Obaachan and Jiichan moves to quarrel, Summer remind the words of her mother, “...after that number of years, you no longer had to be polite all the time” (5). It makes the children to learn to show their presence, importance, opinion and participation in the perfect period. It is also to make the girl children learn not to leave their dignity ever. Often Obaachan make the children to repeat her words to check whether they are listening. It is the good habit that Summer learns from her.

Melody (or) Mel is a close friend of Summer. For the meeting party, Mel joins Summer’s family to help. Obaachan asks Mel to vacuum the room. Basically, the culture should be strictly followed by the women. It means the women are to serve their family and be the house hold material. Summer’s family works as the contract custom harvesters. It means to harvest wheat for the land owners through the contract dealers. The farmer works under the dealers. They are responsible to complete the work within the particular time for the land owners. The dealers allot the workers to harvest, by providing harvesting equipments which got through the loan.

During their lunch, Obaachan expresses her love toward Jaz unconsciously. This makes Summer feels sad, but she consoles herself as a elder one. It shows that the women are the symbol of Tolerance. When they did not get their own space from others, they have to seek their self support. Summer visits school for the last day before leaving for harvesting. She de-stress herself with Thunder (a pet dog) before entering into the house. Summer dislikes the single behavior of Obaachan. Obaachan like to eat plum fruit more. But she keeps the seed into a bowl. Summer hates like, “Spitting seeds like that would have gotten me quite a scolding, but as I said, he didn’t have to use her manners anymore because she was old” (26).



Summer should wear the rubber gloves before starting to make the dish. It is a rule by Obaachan, because she admires the beauty of her hand. Beauty is the hidden word refers to women. The major superstitious belief about women is that they are to be beauty conscious. During the bed time, Jiichan reveals his past story. Stories carry the part to pass the important role of women to the new generation. The major role of women is pregenerated. The stories of Jiichan reflect the moral and concentrating on the single work gives its unique success. In Jiichan's style, "I want you to remember, always keep eye open for special weed" (29). The special weed is the culture to get the unique success to pass it over to upcoming generation.

Summer suffers from DEET and its unusual smell. During the travel, Summer and Thunder enjoys the moisture air through the windows of the glass. Obaachan suffers from her back pain and takes rest in the middle of the highway. The sweet quarrel commences among them. They argue for who dies first by comparing the healthy foods they take. Summer is responsible for Jaz. Jiichan gives suggestion Summer for concentrating on Jaz. It is, "In fact, Jiichan taught me to meditate partly because he thought that would help my concentration whenever I had to hold Jaz back" (35).

They reach Mr. Parker's house after sunrise. Summer's innocence makes her to think the sun as the red ball in Japanese flag. Mr. Parker's development encourages Summer to make creative improvement in her life. Mrs. Parker is so kind and humble towards the workers. The meeting is to drive fast to Texas, as they should reach before fog storm approaches. A strict rule of the Parker's Harvesting Company is to harvest the wheat before rain. If it successfully done, Mr. Parker takes the employees to the special trip. She appreciates the attitude of Mrs. Parker. Mostly, the maintenance of time is possible only by women.

Mrs. Parker was all business a lot of the time, but she was very kind, and if anyone got hurt, she was all over them like a Band-Aid. She was a large woman with a strong, caring face, the sort of face that made you like her right away because he was nice, but you knew you couldn't take advantage of her. (43).

When they reach Texas, everyone start their work immediately. Obaachan will take her car to buy things for cooking.

Obaachan frowns at Summer not to stare at boys. Because boys cause trouble, it is not her age to face the issues. She blabbers about the age of girls get marry in this era. Like, "In my day girl not married by eighteen, she a reject. Different today. Girls get married at thirty. So if I stare at boy at twelve and get married at eighteen, that mean you tare at boy at twenty-four and get married at thirty" (54). Obaachan advises Summer to look after her own life than to get distraction. The team members are afraid of rain and hailstorm for harvesting. It reflects the good idea to make hay while the sun shines. The timing is more important for harvesting as it gives the essence of it. Summer shares, "My secret goal was to make mosquitoes out of real gold and sell them for jewelry" (59). It views the obstacles of women to throw from their life.

Summer's friend says life go on forever. But from her view, life makes everyone to realize something. Summer believes that life is not only to live and it is also to learn. The



wheat harvesting happens only when it carries thirteen point five percent moist. Timing is everything for harvesting. Mrs. Parker includes Tuna Sandwiches, Chicken Salad Sandwiches, and wheat bread in menu. Robbie, Son of Mr. Parker admires the photographic memory of his mother.

Summer feels hesitate for being responsible to find a grocery store. She thinks, she left free when she is with her parents. She has the habit of taking mental notes. She wishes to be a perfectionist like her grandmother Obaachan. Summer feel embarrassing to not having the photographic memory like Mrs. Parker.

Summer choose *The Separate Peace* to do her assignment for the school project. The book makes to think about deep inside of her. The women's search of peace in their life does not find the end. Summer walks with bare feet in a garden. It reminds her mother's words, "...because apparently, you could step on all sorts of terrible things outside-to her, the ground was a battle field" (88). She admires the farm and feels the life in it, even it is a part of the dirt.

May be I should just write the truth and say that it was the worst book I ever read, but that it made me wonder things about myself. It made me think that each person had all sorts of things going on inside of them, but most of these things would never surface unless circumstances were exactly right. So basically, inside of me was a big wilderness, and then around the wilderness was a nice, mowed lawn (103).

At last, she realizes herself as a genius. When the sky fills with the clouds and disappears, Summer thinks about the visualization of equality. The contradictory thought between Obaachan and Mrs. Parker resemble the consciousness of health. Summer admires the memory power of Mrs. Parker. Mrs. Parker repeats the complete novel without seeing after one read. Summer feels jealous of her talent and responsibility. One of the dishes in a buffet system goes wrong by Obaachan. Mrs. Parker does not believe her ears of Obaachan's unrespectable reply. Even the small mistakes of women are considered as against the world and in favor of crime.

When Summer returns home, Obaachan notices her attachment with Robbie. As a responsible grandmother, she warns Summer's activity friendship is dangerous. Summer thinks, "I'm a good cook", I said triumphantly. "Men don't care about good cook until ready to get married," Obaachan said" (144). The world wants women to be a perfect marriage material. Even the culture is left in the responsibility of women to cope with.

Summer forgets to do her assignment to share her experience of harvest. She share her days in simple words. They are "We harvest the crops that feed the world" (148). The women are partially compared with the nature as it suffers in the world and serve the world. She adds another view. They are, "I help cook for the crew because my grandmother, who is supposed to be cooking, isn't well" (149). In here, undoubtedly the women have to follow what her same gender did before.

She learns cooking from Obaachan. Obaachan suggests her to put love into the dishes. Hence, it gives its best for consumers. Like, "Jiichan had told me that while I was cooking, I





should put love into what I was doing, and then the food would be healthier” (154). The world suggests putting love only during cooking, but for equality is doubtful.

Summer gets ready to reveal the story of the dead chicken to the Parkers. She encourages herself from, “Like, instead of sitting around worrying about it, just get the confession and punishment over with as quickly as I could” (156). If they have to move to Oklahoma, she changes herself to be so much responsible and will also meet many consequences.

Summer feels happy of Laskey’s words, “I appreciate your honesty” (167). The word of appreciation is like a life time thirst for women. Obaachan says, “But sometimes you have to do something stupid to do right thing. But right thing more important than stupid” (168). Learning from elders looks like the stepping stones to see delightful peace. Mr. Parker thinks to move some workers to Oklahoma soon. But Summer feels more as she is going to miss Robbie. Obaachan feels worried, because Jiichan works more in his old age. First time in Summer’s life, he is going to sleep by facing south. It is a great thing, because she has to forgive even the bed for everyone in her home. Forgiveness is portrayed as primary section of women’s character.

Summer shares “Sometime you’ll be happy and you’ll be sad, just like anyone” (180) to Jaz. It reflects the truth of women life. Jaz starts to mold himself to become mature and accept the life and ready to face the circumstances. When he suffers to sleep, Jiichan climbs up to his couch and recites his past story. It is about Jiichan gets lost in his childhood days. When he returns back to his home, he learns the lesson from his teacher. That is “They say school number one important, but even number one you don’t have to think of all the time. When you walk, think of walk” (181). Often he tells the story to concentrate on single thing to meet the success.

Jiichan and Summer discuss about Opinions and Social Pressure. When Summer cuts an onion, she begins to cry. Jiichan shares Monsanto, a huge agricultural biotechnology company develops an onion that does not make us cry. The uncut wheat looks like a flying carpet in the day time. It looks admirable. Obaachan informs Summer, Jiichan and Jaz to take rest in the combine, as she is going to drive. Summer questions Obaachan whether she feels humiliate and proud at the same time. Obaachan replies it as the human condition. She shares sometimes everyone have to take the life as it is. They have no option to choose.

The next day, the harvesters check the moisture level of the wheat to harvest. But the wheat moisture is in the maximum level. They procrastinate some hours to check the level. After some time, they ready to harvest. It reveals that the change take some time. Obaachan sets her cooking vessels in the night. Summer comments her as an incredible sleepless woman. The success blooms only from the sleepless nights. Jiichan worries for, “This worst moment of my life” (208). It is because his body is not in the condition to work hard and thinks big to repay the mortgage.

Summer wants to be a different kid and practices to meditate. Obaachan has more healthy foods and drinks for Jiichan. She expresses her love towards him. She questions with care, “How you feel old man?” (215). After so many works, the crew takes a break. Jiichan



takes a sound sleep and ask Summer to inform Mick that he is not going to work anymore. He feels satisfy by saying, “Your Obaachan drive when her neck hurt, I should drive when I sick. But she stronger than me. Tell Mick I need quit now. Cannot do more” (216). It portrays the clear view of women are not even physically weaker sex. The crew feels sad because,

The land here was more terraced than the land on the Laskey farm. This made the going slower. There was no way one combine could cut all the wheat that was here in only a few days. Even though it was a small farm, right then it seemed like the biggest farm in the world. The combine shook as I rolled into a trench hidden beneath the remnants of cut wheat. (218)

Summer thinks of the job, mortgage, house and life. At night, Summer comes out of the room and plans to drive the combine. She does not have light at night. She moves to the place of combine with help of Thunder. But in the middle, Thunder leave her alone and runs into the dark and disappear.

She scares for being alone. Her deed are, “I closed my eyes and took a few big breaths. But I didn’t have a choice” (227). She switches on the light of the combine and gives two horn sounds of combine. Mick notices that Summer tries to drive. He help her and divides their farm as north and south. When Summer begins the combine, it moves forward with faster speed. She feels little bit scary. She thinks to be sensitive to the ground. It is like, “It was kind of like when you’re walking and you automatically adjust your feet with each step” (229). Mick asks her to slow down. Summer thinks that Mick discourages her and shouts him as a negative person.

She believes the word of Obaachan, “I remembered Obaachan saying pressure was the most powerful force in the world. I had a lot of pressure on me and in me” (230). It means the pressure forces everyone to move forward. Obaachan shares it in a optimistic tone. Even with more tension, Summer works with the combine to harvest the wheat within the time. The dust hides Mick and she completes half of the work. It makes her to feel happy and hugs Thunder.

She recollects the word of her father, “Rise to the occasion!” (235). It motivates her to correct herself. When she steps down to clean the farm, Mick stops her and asks her to return to the motel. At last, Mick encourages Summer as she does her decent job cutting. His words make Summer to think him like a big brother. She feels tire by thinking, “I cried because I was relieved the night was over and also because I knew I had to go back out there tomorrow and run the combine again” (238).

They plan to go for the hotel to have their dinner. For that, they enquire the best restaurant near the motel. At night, Summer cleans all the vessels before sleep. She thinks of Mick talk less to all. She reminds of the workers talk less in front of their higher officials. Like, “It’s hard to have a big conversation with people who are in charge of you sixteen hours a day” (250). They share about the food they have in the restaurant. Obaachan says, if we put love in the food while cooking, the person who eats becomes stronger. If we put hate in the food, the person dies.



The next morning, Summer notices a boy is very friendly and close to Jaz. She wishes to bring that boy to her house, so that Jaz would not feel lonely again. That night, she secretly moves out to the farm field. Mick helps Summer to drive combine. When she starts the combine, she feels like safe and secure. She moves the combine very slowly, like “The bin was empty when I started I drove slowly, sometimes even more slowly than two miles an hour” (258). She realizes her happy mood while she smells the scent of cut wheat. She feels proud and encourages herself, “Since I went two miles an hour and good drivers went five mile an hour that meant I was 40 percent of a combine driver, more or less. Not bad for a twelve year-old girl” (260). She satisfies and trusts herself to improve their family condition. She feels courage and sights the black sky, stars and the wheat as her world. Her fear leaves her and the dust of her personality start to settle. She does not do any mistakes and wants to jump up to the sky.

Obaachan and Jiichan come to know about the hard work of Summer. They encourage her to continue and start to trust her for the improvement of the family. Summer surprises the beauty of hard work. The combine’s slow move and the moon’s hang over the field is admiring for Summer. She reminds of her father’s words, “You do what you can do” (270). The Jiichan’s family comes out of the bad luck.

The good luck approaches them after many struggles. Summer views the bad luck is to bring out her talent to combine driving and her thirst to learn new and become expert. The bad luck helps to make realize her family about Summer’s love and care. She jumps and walks with the happiness in the middle of the highway. It ends with new hope.

Women are not only suffers of their gender, but also by race, class, and illiteracy. They opt to de-stress themselves to face their surroundings. Their only option to motivate them is SELF. Beauty is the word given to stop rejuvenating the women’s rights and talents. The travel of Summer through the moisture air reflects the love of surrounding towards women. Throughout the novel, the harvesting resembles the life of women. Women are with the package of responsibility to carry the idea and rules of culture to their upcoming generation. At proper age the women have to learn household works and get marry, give birth and teach the lesson to their daughters that she learnt. Procrastinating the harvest leads to the destruction of weeds. Perfectionism is the term born to decorate the action of women. Feminist literature strives to get the freedom to convey their thoughts, the recognition of individuality, getting financial strength.

The major characters of the novel, moves from Kansas to Texas and to Oklahoma. They work under contract for Parker’s Harvesting Company. Even a twelve year old girl, Summer works as a labor to repay the mortgage of her family. Summer’s family is oppressed to follow the instruction of the Parkers. They have no option to change the list of menu even. When Jiichan gets sick, Mr. Parker offers only an hour to rest and restart the work. The sudden plan to move another area makes the crew to struggle.

The encouraging words of Summer’s father and Jiichan makes her to move forward and take the position to save their family. Hard work, Success, Individuality is not only meant for men. It holds the carpet for the talent minds.



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## Subaltern Hues in Devaki Nilayamgode's Memoirs

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### Abstract

*Antharjanam, Memoirs of a Namboodiri Woman, is the first full-length account of a Namboodiri (Kerala Brahmin) woman's life, a compilation of Smt. Devaki Nilayamgode's memoirs, translated from Malayalam by Radhika P. Menon and Indira Menon, reads like a single book with logically sequenced chapters. Minority discourses have gained considerable currency in the recent decades providing platforms for the surfacing of the marginalised groups, as part of a shift of paradigm in cultural discourses. Due to the economic/cultural/caste-class forwardness of her community, Devaki Nilayamgode cannot be literally treated as a 'subaltern' in the strict sense of the term. What is crucial here is to see that the gendered, old, homely, semiliterate Brahmin woman and a non-professional writer, who had experienced life within the confinements of a pungent paternal world and who has survived in a society which was eclipsed by the dominant concerns of the commanding group, is attempting at expressing her innermost feelings through the possibilities of narration, rendering new scripts for women's lives, deciphering submerged subaltern voices/presences, during the process. Dealing with the subjective resources of the author's memory, I attempt to foreground how a life narrative becomes a reclamation of agency particularly by those who have been marginalised through class, race or gender and as a mode of self-expression, inventing a new identity beyond their caste/gender frame. I have adopted a flexible theoretical application of feminist, Marxist, Postcolonial critical approaches, with modifications suitable to women's experiences in the textual context to excavate the representation of the marginalia that had eluded the grasp of compressive categorizations.*

**Keywords:** Marginality, Gender-Expectations, Power-Relations, Subversive Potential.

The social class structure of Kerala during pre-independence period can be conceived through various interactional axes of gender, caste, class and community identities. During the early Middle ages, Kerala Brahmins---Namboodiris---shaped the society on the lines of the caste system. Brahmin community, occupying the privileged top cluster, was interwoven with rigid proscriptions rooted in patriarchal ideology of male domination, subsequently displaying a blunt suppression of the 'other', especially women. Caste and gender hierarchy are thus interconnected factors that formed the organising principles of Brahminical social order. Smt. Devaki Nilayamgode, in her 'book of memories', *Antharjanam, Memoirs of a Namboodiri Woman*, effortlessly reflects the history of an age through the sieve of memory and provides



direct visions of the lives of Namboodiri women confined to the sombre corners of domesticity and their fervent attempts to flee from their clogged life.

In Kerala, Namboodiris held a powerful position with a long history of socio-cultural and economic dominance and command over resources. They constructed and perpetuated a set of social arrangements that preserved their exclusivity and cultural uniqueness. Patrilineal succession, the emergence of private control over land and their claim to the ritual and ideological leadership of society through sacred knowledge have helped them to establish and preserve their hegemony over different socio-economic channels. Namboodiris thus reinforced their feudal elite status as the landowning religious aristocracy through their adherence to orthodox traditions and rituals and administering grip on land, temples and their subsidiary villages. Their regulated interactions with different groups aided them to maintain strategic relations with each of them, extracting different sorts of services and benefits. They retained a sense of pride in their conscious display of materialistic and cultural superiority and asserted their eminence by clearly marking their caste prestige and distinctness, fortifying their high-ranking in the given social arrangement.

Nilayamode's writings typify the significant position and aura of superiority that Namboodiris commanded in society. The Illams (residence) were very spacious with Nataka shala for staging performances like Kathakali or to serve meals to a thousand people at a time, a big kitchen called Oottupura, where men enjoyed coffee and snacks leaning against the railings, (6) and Pathaayams (place to store grains or vessels) filled with golden grains of paddy, golden coloured Uurulis (large vessels) and utensils made of bell metal, brass, bronze and wood, the spacious Nilavara (underground cell in the house) with granite floor, walls and ceiling and the smooth shiny Chinese jars used to store food-stuffs inside Nilavara were all pointers to the prosperity of the family. (138)

Though the Brahmin women were honoured members in society, they were considered inferior by their men-folk. "Antharjanams have always been a source of great fascination in popular imagination of Kerala. To an outsider's eyes, they were living exotica. Cocooned in luxury, shielded from public view, always escorted by an entourage of obsequious attendants and endlessly enjoying a hedonistic life full of festivals and elaborate feasts, these upper caste women appeared to lead a charmed life. However, what most people never realised was that the antharjanam's awe-inspiring exclusivity concealed the cruellest form of patriarchal oppression that robbed them not only of independence and education but even the simplest and most innocent of joys." A Namboodiri girl had no right over her father's property. Preferential treatment and consideration were given to boys from their early infancy. The birth of a girl was not considered auspicious. Prayers were conducted only for "the boy's long life and good fortune" (83) because it was believed that sons had the power to "elevate their wandering spirits to the higher plane inhabited by their departed forefathers." (83) The world of colours and fragrances were banned for girls since childhood, conditioning their impulses to a dull, unexciting life pattern. "Colourful and sweet-smelling flowers were used only in the pujas for deities ... or in the temple" (16) and they were expected to dress "very simply without any redeeming colour." (24) Education was denied to them and could





not get into any profession. They were not permitted to read and were excluded from learning Vedas or religious texts. "Initiation into learning, studying alphabet and reading the Ramayana - this completed a girl's education" (30) and the only prayer they were taught to repeat was to have plenty of food, clothes and enjoy marital bliss. (31) The large hall where Sanskrit was taught, held a wide collection of books; but "this was a place only for men" (137).

Namboodiris practised a peculiar set of marriage and inheritance system to keep the control over the family-property intact. Only the eldest male member within the family was allowed to marry a Namboodiri girl. Many Namboodiri girls had to remain unmarried throughout their life as they were prohibited from marrying outside their caste -group. Many of them were forced to marry aged-men, who were already married and had to endure a drab life with co-wives. Often, small girls, whose *Uduthu thudangal* (Puberty ritual) had not even been performed, were forced into marriage and no one paid attention to their refusal. They were forcibly taken to the bedrooms by the matrons of the Illam; frightened and anxious, these little girls waited to get the door opened in the morning, to escape. (115) Women had to prioritise their husbands' needs over everything and Antharjanams very rarely got chance to take care of their own children, as most of the time they would be busy with customary temple visits, assembling Pooja items for daily worship, cooking sumptuous meals to the family and guests and preparing offerings for the deity. (16) It was women's duty to maintain the purity of food, and their taintless domestic management became a pivotal element in the maintenance of purity of rituals. Delicacies like coffee and snacks were meant only for Namboodiris; children looked pale and consumptive, but cow's milk was never meant for them. It was used to make ghee in which lamps were lit at the temple or to prepare coffee or to make currys to serve the Namboodiris at feasts. (14) When Nilayamgode writes how the women folk longed to drink coffee and waited eagerly in the evenings for a small portion of snacks to reach the inner rooms, what is disclosed before us is a life of impoverishment that had been imposed on Antharjanams, children and the servant-class at the Illams.

Antharjanams were mainly confined into routine domestic chores. They rarely got opportunity to go outside their Illams and were not allowed to use or move freely around *Verandhas* (a roofed platform along the outside of a house) or *Poomughams* (portico), which were used by male members and visitors. However, on such rare occasions of their visit to near- by temples, they had to cover their entire body with white cloth (*Ghosha*) and should use *Olakuda* (palm-leaf umbrellas) to cover their face. Usually, they were accompanied by servants, who made sounds to drive off low caste people to avoid pollution. Widowhood was a stigma and strict patriarchal rules ensured that even young widows did not attract the attention of other males. Any shadow of suspicion would condemn them to *Smarthavicharam*, the inhuman ritualistic trial by elderly males, and outcasting. "In the Namboodiri community, nothing was considered a greater sign of misfortune than the sight of a widow." (78) Weak, vulnerable and abandoned, they tolerated their dreadful life, cursing themselves. Well-known social reformer V.T. Bhattathiripad aptly observed that the women of Namboodiri community were insignificant scapegoats of male ascendancy that formed the



axis of social system and the notions of nobility of clan, superior family status and dowry system were holy weapons employed to demoralise the dignity of the individual. Referring to the isolation and seclusion they were kept, Namboodiri women were called 'Antharjanams' or 'Akathulla aal' -which means 'Person Living Inside', indicating their extreme home-bound existence within the vast feudal estates.

Nilayamgode, thus attests that traditional Brahminism was an extremely oppressive system in its treatment of women, in which the stereotypical male enjoyed a carefree existence absolved of responsibilities and women were subjected to severe forms of restrictions under the tyrannical dominance of the men folk. But her narration also captures those lives who live in marginalized conditions, suffer economic exploitation, sexual abuse, socio-cultural persecution and political powerlessness, and deciphers experiences of oppression and their transformation into narratives of resilience. Politics of power remains as the subtext of narration, representing the personal/private in the public/political domain, blurring the distinction between the two. It does not merely reproduce the events or people it describes; through an array of subtle silences, fissures and nuances, it outspreads a subverbal awareness, embedded with questions and equations of the continuous struggles between the loss of identity and assertions of subjectivity.

Nilayamgode remembers that, though girls were not permitted to read, they took pains to read in secrecy and managed to familiarise themselves with the works of famous writers and world classics. (32) Little girls were also smart enough to sneakily enter the kitchen to take away some coffee powder, sugar and a huge quantity of thick milk to make coffee, the exquisite drink savoured only by the male Namboodiris of the Illam, smartly hiding the evidences of their risky deed. (17) There were women at her Illam, including her mother, who overlooked the norms, when it came to rendering a helping hand to others in their crises, and hurrying to the needy with positive thinking (100). At a time when girls were barely educated, they could read even *Puranas* and efficiently manage the household. (4) Staying even within the confining areas of domesticity, Antharjanams had managed to establish female spaces of support, companionship and modest enjoyments. While meeting at temple premises, they decided the venue of each year's *Kaikottikkali*, (type of dance performed by women with a set-pattern of steps and clapping of hands) and all the women gladly hurried towards the venue unfailingly, to be part of the enthusiasm. (49) Mutual help and friendship among Antharjanams were also quite common at that time and some of them undertook the responsibility of nursing sick women with unfeigned concern and deep care. (122) They were instantly ready to offer a helping hand to the forlorn women and permitted them to stay on and accepted them as part of their daily living. (73) There was no reluctance on their part to preserve grains and seeds for future necessities and also preserved with care the sackful of grains their neighbours brought in for safekeeping. (140) Antharjanams did not have money to satisfy even their slightest demands, as they did not have right to own property or meaningful professions. Thus, they saved money for their most pressing needs from the *Pidiyari*, a fistful of rice they put away in their personal container daily to be sold outside. (9) We also come across strong female figures who displayed extraordinary will power to hold



themselves together with confidence (9) even when widowhood had deprived them of their status in family and society. Nilayamcode also writes, how Namboodiris, initially unwilling to adapt to changes in wider society, also could not remain isolated from the resurgent phase of modernisation started off with the advent of colonialism. A flurry of socio, cultural and economic changes associated with colonial modernity had forced them to shift towards a wider consciousness of being a united community, leading to the formation of socio-cultural organisations like Yogakshema Sabha and Antharjana Samajam, which sought to instill in Antharjanams the importance of education, self-employment and steady income for women. Many women dared to define themselves differently by discarding their traditional umbrellas and enveloping cloth wraps, and accepting a life style and body image that they were comfortable with. (109) Centres were also setup to give vocational training to Antharjanams (153) which motivated them to stand up for themselves and seek diverse experiences and a full-fledged partaking in different domains of the wider world. Nilayamcode attests that the process of humanising the Namboodiris had levelled out most differences and succeeded in bringing mere homemakers to the forefront of public life (154). The public also began to respond to the changing needs of the time, irrespective of caste, creed and gender. Ethos against social disabilities and the quest for social justice naturally helped to improve women's social conditions, helping them to be conscious of their rightful place and opened up new vistas before them, affirming their privileges and responsibilities in the larger society.

Nilayamcode not just narrates about subversive female figures of her community who possessed the grit to subvert their subalternity even while remaining within the patrilinear, class-structured society, but also about the audacity of the proletariat women who refused to be reduced to the role of a silent 'other' with flat refusals to swallow objectifications in stoic resignation. Nilayamcode's rendition is with full of affection and admiration when she describes the life-style of proletariat women. The Brahminic day-today discourses had moulded an ambition in women for the permanency of life in the other world by fulfilling the ritualistic duties ascribed to them. In contrast, life for a proletariat woman is related to meaningful and productive work in this world. They were thoroughly integrated into labour systems and the interaction of these women with the land, water, plants, live-stock and weather were constructive, unlike the exploitative, non-labouring leisure activities of upper caste men. Women were experts in their work, with enormous physical and mental skills which the upper caste women utterly lacked. While the upper caste women were devoid of rights to themselves, these working-class women were not contained in a derivative position. They laboured efficiently, and through a creative interaction with nature and life, they preserved and developed knowledge and skills to create socially useful products. The whole process of the paddy being tied into sheaves, threshed with the feet, the grains separated from the chaff by the wind and hay-stacking were done by women who were adept at it (127) and each woman had "a distinctive, identifiable method" of doing their work (129). They were repositories of the knowledge of nature. Their concoction of medicinal leaves provided a panacea for the sickness of the villagers. The therapeutic porridge they served to their women post-confinement was highly effective and restorative. (128). "They took pregnancy and



childbirth in their stride " (128) and did not have a long period of rest after their confinement. The pains and pleasure of giving birth to a new human being is emotionally shared by all the women folk and before long, they returned to work in the fields to be part of their labour collective.

Their thorough understanding of land had always helped them to improve their labour productivity. "Farmers' wives' could tell from the direction of the clouds whether they would bring rain or not" (133). They maintained stocks of plant genes, and carefully selected and preserved seeds for planting. "Sackfuls of these seeds were carried by women to the fields, taking care not to break the sprouted ends" (131). Their experience had also helped them to work out successful hybridization and grafting of plants, fastidious uprooting and transplanting of the seedlings, precise sowing and prosperous harvests. (132) Shared work played a positive role in their life. There was a collective integration of the entire family into the productive labour system. The workers' children helped out their mothers by carrying small bundles of harvested paddy on their heads and arranging them on the threshing floor (129). They also stood guard over the planted seeds till they took root in the soil. (132) "Grandfathers and grandmothers also arrived to help their children" (134) and the whole family accompanied the women carrying headloads of paddy for sale at the fair, and delightfully returned from the fairgrounds with dates, roasted grain, *murukkus* to munch, and enough glass bangles to cover their wrists. (135) --- the simplest, but precious pleasures that they derived out of their hard work and productive knowledge.

The accumulation of private property by the hegemony neglected the labour power of the workers and for all the labour that they had invested in the production, very little reached them. "Day time was spent harvesting paddy and at the night, threshing it with the feet --- this was how each day went." (133) yet, what they received as wages were pouches of paddy, a bundle of roasted rice and a bunch of banana fruits. (132-133) Immediately after the harvest, they had more than enough to spare. But, with their menial funds getting exhausted right away, most of them were forced to take a loan against the following year's harvest. (135) Nonetheless, they "seemed contented" (132) and showed "no visible signs of fatigue" (131) or dissatisfaction.

Their "sense of involvement and discipline" (128) is further highlighted by the writer as she unravels their loyalty to the employer and the reverence they accord to hard work. "Even when they had no work in our fields, they would ask our permission before going to work for others" (129) and always considered work as worship, doing it with simplicity, love and commitment, "paying obeisance to Mother Earth and her produce" (129) for blessing their hardwork with plentitude. While the men hurried to the toddy shop after a gruelling day's work, women readily rushed back home to finish off their domestic chores.(133) Nilayamgode also mentions about their common sense and adaptability, that prompted them to use "tapioca, wheat, semolina and other such edible things" (144) during famines to ensure their family's survival, while the upper caste women plainly cried out aloud finding empty vessels in their kitchen.

Their hectic work schedules but did not prevent them from establishing constant

interaction and belongingness with other social beings. While Namboodiri women had to suffer the pangs of an isolated life and the burdens of segregated roles, these women enjoyed moments of togetherness with their kith and kin while working, cooking or watching festivities. They owned an exemplary skill not disengage themselves from creative thought while working and "their joy in the work poured out in the form of songs." (132) This made labouring process a pleasure, helping them to overcome their exhaustion. These songs, that observed the natural rhythm of the season, not just instilled respect for the generosity of nature, but also helped them to preserve their cultural tradition, remember their history, convey their concerns and desires, express their solidarity with each other, and enjoy themselves through productive toil and talent.

Nilamgode also delineates how smartly the washerwomen carried themselves. She had noticed that they always dressed neatly, their appearance untouched by the sun and the wind beating down on them. Their "strenuous exertions ensured their good health" and the "strength to hoist heavy things". (129) Their children, even their guard-dogs were "healthy and well-groomed", (25) predisposed to tackle any adversities or hardships, while Namboodiri children were victims of defective seclusions and prohibitions, making them feeble and fragile. The washerwomen were always pleased with the modest pleasures of life, like the solicitous enquiries of Antharjanams and the share of food given to them to take home. The women of Pakaravoor called the washerwomen affectionately by their names, not just as *Veluthedath Ullaval*. Their services were highly valued and the Antharjanams expressed their affection and gratitude by evincing keen interest in their family matters and giving them baskets of extra food and special items and sweets. (24) When the Antharjanams suffered the pangs of hunger and destitution due to the fickleness of their menfolk, they were helped by their maids who would work in other homes and share some of the rice and vegetables they were given as payments with these defenceless Antharjanams. (75) Their benevolence does not become a mere execution of their duty towards their Namboodiri-mistress, but an act of empathy that women share with each other. This sense of solicitude affirms the collective bonding of all women irrespective of their class and creed that exists as an integral component of their natural consciousness.

Marginalisation of the underprivileged classes is a historical reality and the ruling class creates its own values in what it presents as a common culture, legitimizing its own interests by inducing other classes to accept this 'neutral' culture with a beguiling offer of elevating them from their backwardness. Viewing from the elevated heights of superiority, the hegemony maintains an imprudent dismissal of the proletariat, denigrating them as a passive entity which is constantly in need of help from above. But, as domination works through a dualistic world where power and resistance are inter-wined, the instances of emancipatory possibilities disseminate through the gaps and cracks in social arrangements. By reason of gender, caste and class, the backward women had to face many experiences of humiliations, deprivation, exploitation and isolation in all walks of their life. Their individual voice and agency were thoroughly repressed from hegemonic discourses and historical representations. Nilayamgode does not claim to speak for their experience, but through the





seemingly neutral strands of her writing, Nilaymgode scripts the body and mind of these women and the emancipatory directions of their existence. Through Nilaymgode's words, they emerge before us as an organic group with a prolific community feeling --- self-made, efficient, reliable, conscientious and well-disposed. Their oratures incorporate and transmit their values, ideas, desires and heritage into the symbolic cultural order and potentially unsettle it by reviving the primal energy of life-giving forces. They transcend the wounds of all the agonizing events into the comforting joy of creative potency and feminine determination, expressing their identity and perspectives in their own terms, in their unique language without fear of consequences. Though not aware of the implication of their actions, their everyday acts of resilience, the way they endure and withstand the conditions of subordination and their distinctive modes of accepting their culture in its own terms subvert and rework the power relations. The female strength here becomes a signifier of a force which has always been excluded from the patriarchal order of things, but which is capable of disrupting that order to the point of destroying it.

Devaki Nilaymgode's memoir, thus, moving between the positions of being a witness, spectator and participant, mines those memory tropes which can yield complex human subjects in new light, re-inscribing their subjectivities in a new register. Monologic hegemonic representations are problematized and defamiliarized by evoking the intricate connection between the individual and communal, creating a dialectic between both. It invokes multiple subjectivities where the unique medium of the individual 'I' reaches out to communal 'We', providing overlapping identifications, where the collective finds a voice in/through the narrating self, that being the outcome of extending a strong identification with those countless subjects all bound by their identity as tyrannized and subjugated. She, thus crafts a narrative that warrants the creation of the 'other' side of the story as equally important to cultural history, employing various 'others' as a means of telling the story, enacting the marginal along new lines, consequently fighting back the bitter pains of passivity and invisibility of borderline experiences. It can be read as an act of cultural intervention that raises the visibility of the peripheral, allowing lost voices to be heard, artfully filtered through the device of memory. Her writings become a graph linking varied experiences, from where probable interpretations radiate in various directions that necessitate a redefining of subjectivities capable of representing a life worth living, executing in /through writing, the performativity of the marginalized self, making its own art as significant and meaningful to the cultural moment.

Hence, this multi voiced act becomes a narrative strategy, which subverts the established standards and anticipations about the content of life narratives, mapping the subalterns' dialectical negotiations with a history which places them as idealized or invisible, leading to reformulations of what it means to be human.

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## Reflections of Ecocritical aspects in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

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### Abstract

*Literature reflects the life of humans. It has always been focused on the idea of various themes. The writers bring out the theme of nature in many of their works. Eco Criticism is concerned with the relationship between environment and literature. It also reveals how man's relationships and his physical environment are reflected in literature. Literary scholars examine the texts of environmental concerns and analyze the various ways that literature treats the subject of nature. This paper mainly focuses on the study of ecocriticism and its aspects in the Indian English Novel "The Hungry Tide". Ecocritical analysis of his work reveals the themes of nature as preserver and destroyer of life and nature as the cause of suffering.*

**Keywords:** Literature, Ecocriticism, Environment, Nature.

Eco criticism is a literary theory. It is very significant in the present scenario. Reading of literary texts under the lens of eco critical aspects are one of the functions of eco criticism. It not only explores the nature in a work but also magnifies the literary revelations of the environment. Ecological aspect is vividly portrayed in the works of many Indian English Writers. Kamala Markandeya, Raja Rao, R.K.Narayan, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Amitav Ghosh and Bhabani Bhattacharya were also written about nature and environment.

An Indian born author Amitav Ghosh completed his studies at Dehra Dun, New Delhi, Alexandria and Oxford. He got a doctoral degree from Oxford University. He taught in many universities. The Circle of Reason is the first novel of Ghosh. In 2007, he won the Padma Shri award from the Indian Government for his contribution in literature.

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* is a well known example of using the ecological aspects in the entire story. The Hungry Tide depicts the concept of nature. The novel is based on the system of ecological aspects in the world. The Hungry Tide is the sixth novel of Amitav Ghosh. The novel won the 2004 Hutch Crossword Book Award for Fiction. The novel clearly brings out the wrath of nature and fragility of humans at the mercy of nature. The story of *The Hungry Tide* centers on Sundarbans. Ghosh depicts the ecological witness in the West Bengal region after 2004. The region is encircled by the Mangrove forest. "...A mangrove forest is a universe unto itself..." (9) The characters are entirely related to the ecological factors in the novel. "...Every year, dozens of people... .. killed by tigers, snakes and crocodiles ... ..every day, thousands of acres of forest disappear underwater..." (25) The aspect of nature such as tiger, crocodile and different other animals in the story are

vividly portrayed through the narration. It takes a major role in the whole story. The characters in the entire story act as the bridge between the past and the present. The Protagonist of the novel is the marine biologist Piyali Roy.

The novel focuses on the relationship between the nature and the protagonist Piyali Roy. The setting of the story is on a train journey in the beginning of the novel. The story begins through the eyes of two educated individuals who undertake a train journey to the tide country. In the train, a city based Translator Kanai Dutt encounters Piya. The reason for returning to her native land is exposed through the conversation with Kanai. As a Marine biologist Piya wants to find out a rare species of Dolphin. Kanai comes from Delhi and travels to Sundarbans to meet his aunt. He was born in Bengal and settled as a businessman in Delhi. He arrives at Lusibari to meet his aunt Nilima. He wants to claim the package left for him by his uncle Nirmal. The package contains an account of his uncle's last days. He discovers the records which revolved around Kusum and her son Fokir. They are the victims of expulsion from the Morichjhapi Island. Nilima asked Kanai to read the hand written diary. She also made him to read the whole letter for the benefits of Kusum, an old friend of Kanai.

There are two temporal narratives given by Ghosh. One relates through the journal of Nirmal's recounting the episode of Morichjhapi which happened before twenty eight years. The second unfolds through the expedition of Piya to study the threatened Gangelic River Dolphins. These two narratives focus the problems and issues of wilderness and conservation. It is also associated to the social cost in the populated places by the socio-economic disprivileged both in the present and the past. The special importance given in Hindu mythology is water. It is mainly related with immortality, creation, place and the feminine. In Indian mythology, running water is very sacred.

The Sundarbans is the post colonial area. It is witnessed the increasing human activity, rejecting biodiversity and recognition and marketing of the uniqueness of the Sundarbans. Recently the Sundarbans' bio network witnesses the change from a menacing ecosystem to a menaced eco system. The refugees were settled in the land from Bangladesh like the settlers Fokir, Kusum and Moyna. The people of the places are interested to like to work for humanity such as Nilima, Nirmal and Piya, the Cetologist. The life is highly precarious for the settlers in the place. Attacking of deadly tigers is very common. Eviction and unrest are permanent menaces in this place. At any time, the tidal floods rise and flow over the land without the warning. The island has faced many hardships, famine, poverty, failed dreams and catastrophes. Death is a stalk reality. In spite of having these dangers people like Kusum feel at home in these islands. "She had dreamed of returning to this place of seeing once more these rich fields of mud, these trembling tides" (21)

The forest guide in the novel is Fokir who accompanies woodcutter and the hunters for their expedition in the forest. Those people are very superstitious. They will not set out into the forest and not accompanying by a Fakir. The guide of Piya and Kanai is Fokir through the waterways. Later, Kanai along with Piya and Fakir set off to Bhotbhoti to resume the research of Piya. Kanai resolves to be as a translator between Piya and Fakir. The local fisherman Fokir though kills animals for living also plays an important role in conserving

them. In the process of steering the outsiders safely through the forest, he loses his life. He connects the myth of the hapless and uneducated native, revealed to sharks, crocodiles, snakes and man-eating tigers living in the tide country.

Ghosh makes an effort to give the solution for ecological aspects to the main issue of the novel by relating to the past and present. Reuniting with nature is also emphasized strongly in the whole story of the novel. Ghosh enlightens him in the familiarity with the tide country. He inherits the creatures and the legacy of centuries old oral tradition. Ghosh personified Fakir as an ecological pioneer.

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## A Haven for the Subaltern: The Implication of the Jannat House in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

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### Abstract

*The Institution of a guest house for the subsistence of social outcasts is the prime precept of The Ministry of Utmost Happiness. Anjum's decision to set up Jannat beside a graveyard demonstrates the powerless situation of the ostracised people in society. Roy fashioned Jannat as an abode where outsiders are treated as insiders. The affluent section of the society is merely outlaws at Jannat. By using this model, Roy exhibits the collective trauma experienced by the subalterns. She convenes a community for the helpless lot. The characters and their individual tryst with trauma scrutinise the struggles and challenges of the non-conformists. The writer's resolution to embrace the panorama of subcultures that exist within the subaltern community widens the boundaries of subaltern studies. The community at Jannat endure the challenges of life by a shared understanding of trauma as well as life.*

**Keywords:** Subaltern, Trauma, Roy, Jannat, Outcasts.

The collective trauma undergone by the subaltern community functions as the crux of Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. The systemic discrimination, dearth of representation and want of belongingness that defines the subaltern existence is delineated by Roy with the acute depiction of individual traumatic histories. Transcommunity, orphans, Kashmiris, elderlies and women acquire delegation in this paradigm. The trials and tribulations of individual characters can easily be misconstrued as isolated ordeals. Therefore, a dialogue detailing the repressed socio- political significance of such experiences unfolds a plethora of concerns that stipulate the pathetic situation of the disadvantaged section of the society.

All the major characters of the novel are subaltern archetypes. Being shunned by the society, they suffer in silence. The general public compels them to believe that they are eccentric and unnatural. Their quotidian struggles are so gruesome that they don't have the luxury to feel vulnerable. Moreover, they are politically and socially oppressed so that they are never heard by the people at large. This model of institutionalised discrimination also ensures that the underprivileged people remain underprivileged for the generations to come. History sidelines them to nobodies and the metanarrative diminishes them to minor characters. Roy turn the tables by bringing the historically paltry characters to the forefront



and giving them the reins to construct a narrative of their own. She questions the readers why the subalterns are always “remembered as the forgotten ones.” (Roy 47)

The prime locales of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* also substantiate the novel’s theme of power relations. The Khwabgah, Jannat and Kashmir are all home for the oppressed. The conventional society perceives them as dangerous. The residents of these settings are almost trapped there because they are deemed too outlandish for the outside world. They form small communities within themselves for safety and sanity. Nevertheless, the members of the outside world are unaware of the plight of these people. Since they don’t have first-hand knowledge about these people, the general public conjectures about their whereabouts. Hence, the dominant narrative around the disadvantaged people is tainted with prejudice and hypocrisy.

Anjum’s gateway to the subaltern community is commenced by the knowledge that she doesn’t fit in. Her identity as a ‘hijra’ indirectly deems her as an outcast. Her parents treat her as a faulty creation of God which needs urgent rectification. She feels ashamed of her physique and her feelings. Anjum reconvenes normality in the company of the trans community. While they are mortified and chastened by cops and other public servants, they establish a safe space to protect themselves from the evil of the outside world. Khwabgah is the set for this shared reality.

Roy elucidates the Khwabgah as “the House of Dreams” (Roy 21). The transition from Aftab to Anjum takes place in and around this place. She embraces her innate femininity in the company of Kulsoom Bi and others. The very realisation that she can be true to the core of her identity makes her feel at ease. Still, Roy fashions Khwabgah as an interim getaway from the hegemonic system. According to Ustad Kulsoom Bi, it is a place where “blessed people, came with their dreams that could not be realized in the Duniya” (Roy 48). Khwabgah only moulds Anjum to be a transperson. It doesn’t equip her with the ability to confront the social challenges that are waiting for a person of her sexual orientation. Inside the safe walls of Khwabgah, the members are blissfully unaware of the social and political hegemony that is imposed on transgenders and other subaltern communities. Bombay Silk, Bulbul, Razia, Heera, Baby, Nimmo, Mary and Gudiya are all victims of this ignorance. They don’t voluntarily venture beyond their territories to understand the truth. Nonetheless, Anjum makes headway by involving herself in the Gujarat conflict and eventually gets traumatically wounded.

On the other hand, Jannat is expounded by Roy as a “Paradise” (Roy 60). Unlike Khwabgah, it is not a temporary retreat that exists within the conventional society. In fact, it is an alternate reality with utopian facets. Anjum acknowledges the other-worldly angle of Jannat when she proudly declares to the media that “Hum doosri Duniya se aaye hain” (Roy 91) which means they are from a different world. It is a place where subalterns are treated the way they also wanted to be treated. Religion, caste, gender, economic status and family name is inconsequential in this space. None of the residents are questioned about their past which precipitated their need to seek shelter in a graveyard. They are not forced to spell out their traumatic history because they are embraced by the Jannat house despite all that. Yet, there is





a silent collective recognition of the fact that they are all psychologically wounded by the knowledge that they are alienated by the society. Roy explains this standpoint explicitly in this way:

Their wounds were too old and too new, too different, and perhaps too deep, for healing. But for a fleeting moment, they were able to pool them like accumulated gambling debts and share the pain equally, without naming the injuries or asking which was whose. (Roy 276)

While Khwabgah is a harbour for the ‘hijras’, Jannat is a haven for the subalterns of all kinds. The members of the Jannat house are from divergent backgrounds. Imam Ziauddin is a senior citizen who is estranged by his son and his family. Saddam Hussain became an outcast when his father was killed by Hindu chauvinists. Tilottama is an unconventional woman who fell in love with a Kashmir separatist. Similarly Zakir Mian, Nimmo Gorakhpuri and Anjum have individual horrific pasts that are unfathomable for others. Yet, they cling on to each other so as to survive the horrendous reality that they are exposed to. None of them interpret somebody’s struggles as less grave. Unconditional support and unwavering affirmation are the mottos of Jannat.

A group of social outcasts establishing a guest house beside the graveyard is arguably twenty first centuries’ most accurate metaphor to express the gruesome situation of the underprivileged section of the society. In this way, Roy implies that the subaltern people are perceived by the larger society as dead- like. They are considered so impertinent that the social and political machinery has no record of their existence. The imagery of the graveyard also ratifies the resemblance between the haunted ghosts and the residents of Jannat. They are like condemned souls who are still suffering for past sins. Therefore Roy argues that Anjum “wasn’t living in the graveyard, she was dying in it” (Roy 59).

Roy reimagines Jannat as a portal between the dead and the living. According to Hirschberger, “Trauma Is of Death, and Death Creates Meaning” (6). This validates the idea that the past trauma of the members of Jannat has brought them closer to death. They have already ventured beyond the limits of human life and the limitations it impedes. At Jannat, the heavenly abode and earthly orb concurs to exemplify the philosophy of life and death. This emphasises the mutability of life and inevitability of death.

Nevertheless, Jannat is not just a guest house, it is a funeral parlour. It is the site where the troubled souls achieve absolution. This also supports Jannat’s innuendo as a mythical heaven. But this paradise is exclusively for the subalterns. Jannat Funeral Service only bury the dead bodies which are declined by the society. And the burial system at the Jannat surpasses all religious superstitions and beliefs. Tilo conducted a funeral service for her mother Maryam Ipe by chanting verses from Shakespeare’s *Henry V*. Being a woman, she is not allowed to witness burials but she attends it regardless of that. In this way, Roy invents a prototype milieu for the oppressed people which follow avant- garde practices. Unlike historical exercises of faith, the burial is not carried out by segregating people into breeds and deciding funeral customs. It is done on the basis of the departed soul’s predilections. Thus, Roy reclaims power from the dead and hands it over to the living. Mythical customs and its

implications take a backseat in this situation. Hence, Jannat metaphorically showcases the tumbling down of the hegemonic system.

While Khwabgah rests in the illusory sphere and Jannat in the celestial sphere, Kashmir lies in the Hadean sphere. It showcases nightmarish qualities. The citizens of Kashmir spend every moment of their life at the edge of danger. There is a “faint, acrid smell of gunpowder hanging in the air” (Roy 162) all year around. At one point, Aijaz reveals to Naga that everybody on both sides of the border is monetising the lives of Kashmiris. He underlines this as the reason behind the interminable Kashmir civil battles. The hegemonic system utilizes civil disputes for political stability and economic benefits. The men and women of Kashmir who are tyrannised by the system are uncared for. Nobody genuinely cares about their safety and welfare. In such a framework, the subalterns are forced to fend for themselves. Even that is not working in their favour.

Roy represents the quotidian life at Kashmir with spine- chilling details. She reports that the civil struggle in Kashmir is no longer for liberty; it is for dignity, the dignity to lead a peaceful life. Every single person who is involved in this feud is perpetrating violence in one way or another. So there is no right and wrong in this *modus operandi*. Roy sympathises with Kashmir separatists when she says that they are mere people who are fighting back because that is their only survival strategy. Here, citizens of Kashmir are perceived as subalterns who have no right over their own lives. For them, fending is a way of life.

In this scuffle to survive, they don’t have the luxury to lead a normal life and form healthy relationships. Musa and Arifa’s marriage broke as a consequence of this. Even a small child like Miss Jebeen cannot afford to hold on to the innocence and inanity that her age generously thrusts on her. As a kid, she sees violence more than most people see in their entire lives. Eventually she surrenders to death. Death and distress is depicted as routine ingredients of everyday life at Kashmir. Roy portrays a harrowing scene where mothers are perplexed about what to cook if at all their sons get back home safely. She presents a lifestyle where returning home without any damage is considered as luck. The writer refuses to limit the narrative to one single character. She presents innumerable stories of Kashmiris through letters which exhibits the traumatic reality in Kashmir. She displays these narratives at times with a pinch of dark humour which heightens the tragic elements of the novel. The misery is too mundane that it is even humorous.

*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* renders Kashmir as “the Valley of death” (Roy 298). The living lot in this locale is spiritually and emotionally dead. It displays instances of diabolical qualities. Physical death is the only form of peace and contentment they can ever aspire for. It is almost an escape from the agony of being alive. In Christian doctrine, hell is a place where sinners are punished for eternity. The plights of Kashmiris are very similar. Roy sparks questions about the genesis of their suffering. She also hints about the “intergenerational transmission of trauma” (Rothberg 4) that is inflicted on them. The writer also underscores that the Kashmiris are psychologically wounded. Even when the conflict ends, the progeny will continue to suffer because of the ripples of traumatic legacies. There is no scope for purgation as far as the people of Kashmir are concerned.

“Over time collective trauma becomes the epicentre of group identity, and the lens through which group members understand their social environment” (Hirschberger 2). The trauma that is triggered as a consequence of oppression can also be potentially harmful. A life at the disposal of hegemony can kindle an urge to take charge of their life. This instinct can make them perpetrators of violence in the future. This is the part of the reason why Kashmiris are conventionally misconstrued as terrorists. Yet, the general public never takes the pain to understand the root of their suffering which metamorphoses into violence. The hegemonic system in place takes advantage of this to throw shade at the subaltern and present them as people who don't deserve sympathy. Such a system discriminates them and confines them to the cycle of subjugation. This method of labelling them as a vicious lot triggers collective trauma as well.

Collective trauma can also instill an inferiority complex. Nimmo delineates hijras as lab rats who are “incapable of happiness” (Roy 24). Anjum sees her life as an out- turn of “Butchers’ Luck” (Roy 56). At one point, group of smack addicts tries to abuse her by stating that she is a hijra and Muslim. Even then, she blames herself and her transidentity. This marks the surge of the remnants of the collective trauma which makes them internalize their subservient status in the society. They feel that they are not entitled for even basic human decency.

The transcommunity is hegemonised by a “tripartite system of colonialism” (Mandal 2) as well. Anjum compares the daily life of a transgender to the adversities of the Emergency period. They are interrogated, manhandled and castigated on an everyday basis. In a woeful Flyover episode, Roy describes how the members of the Khwabgah were tortured by the police. They were propelled out of their vans and was forced to run in the dead of the night after being thrashed for no reason. This horrific scene is trivialised by Anjum as a normality. The prejudice associated with the transcommunity makes them even more vulnerable to such intolerances.

Like Anjum, Tilo is ill-treated because of multiple impulses. She was born out of wedlock and was conveniently pronounced as an orphan. Even though Maryam Ipe, her biological mother, adopts her later on, she grows up as an orphan who is offered a grand life out of sympathy. This inferiority complex is the bedrock of Tilo’s trauma. Her relatives and friends treat her as a second- class citizen. Tilo’s affair with a Kashmir separatist makes her exposed to all sorts of discrimination. When captured, the public servants cut her hair short as a mark of punishment. But above all, her womanhood endangers her safety. Her unconventional behaviour and attitude gets widely criticised. Her status first as a single woman and then as single mother attracts attention. Promiscuous men utilize this ill- repute as a rationale to make sexual advances at her. It is this cycle of subjugation that prompted her to join the subaltern community at Jannat.

Tilo is conscious about the repercussions of the orphan- identity. She adopts Miss Jebeen the Second because she sees herself in her. This is a common impulse in the character graph of all the subaltern characters. They relate themselves to other oppressed people and take steps to help them even if they themselves are struggling to survive. Anjum’s decision to



adopt Zainab also springs from this standpoint. She raises Zainab by providing her with all the love and care. Even when Zainab alienates her, Anjum doesn't condemn her. She knows how it is to be labelled as the careless child from her own experience. As Zainab grows into a young lady, she appreciates the magnanimity of Anjum. Zainab's fondness for animals is a ramification of her gratitude. From her childhood, she surrounds herself with animals and looks after them with meticulous attention. Later on, she establishes "a zoo -a Noah's Ark of injured animals" (Roy 303) alongside Jannat. Zainab's zoo is more or less a microcosm of the Jannat. It is a home for animals that are subdued and abandoned by society. Like the residents of Jannat, the animals of Zainab's zoo are wounded. Roy accentuates the theme of power relations repeatedly to underline that the novel is an ode to the struggles of the subaltern.

Maryam Ipe stands in sharp contrast to other characters in the novel because she is not a cast off. In fact, she is from an aristocratic Syrian lineage. According to Roy, Tilo is the "fictional child of Ammu and Velutha in *The God of Small Things*, had their story ended differently" (Roy qtd. in Lau and Mendes 8). Presuming Velutha as a father of Tilo widens the discussion concerning Maryam's trauma. Her conflict with caste hierarchy might be rooted in this account. Her refusal to acknowledge the father of her child might be an extension of her fear to accept that she slept with a Dalit man.

Even though Maryam is not a Dalit, she can be a sufferer of 'collective trauma'. According to Rothberg, "not all traumatized subjects are victims...perpetrators can also be traumatized" (9). The hypocrisy that has been shoved on her psyche is impossible to recover from. This tamper with her emotional substructure and she becomes mentally ill as a consequence. Even though she never confronts her trauma in her lifetime, it surges by itself on her deathbed. Her psychosis at the hands of chronic obstructive lung disease (COPD) can also be understood as a corollary of her mental illness. At the hands of this delirium, she becomes a caste- inquisitor. Maryam queries about the caste and sub- caste of every single person she set her eyes on. She even abuses them by calling casteist cunt words. Maryam is a highly educated woman who is also revered as a humanitarian. For somebody of her standing, it is strange that she suddenly becomes this vulgar. According to Roy, this is a consequence of our hypocrisy. Hence, the psychosis marks the Maryam's surge of repressed trauma is a repercussion of her guilt for yielding for a Dalit man. Her persona as a social activist might be a reparation of sorts for her guilt conscience. This reveals instances of prejudices that are concealed within human conscience as a result of 'historical memory'.

Despite her high- born status, Maryam is also a woman who is subjugated by society. She lacks the station to fall in love with a man of her choice. This concept correlates itself to the love laws that Roy identifies in *The God of Small Things*. She renounces all sorts of impediments that take power away from the individuals. She aspires for a society where men and women have the liberty to live lives on their terms. The hegemony of all sorts that delimits the operation freewill is potentially minacious.

Like Maryam, Daya Chand also has unresolved past traumas. His father's death at the hands of Hindu chauvinists illustrates that the disadvantaged people are perceived as lesser than animals. Daya Chand's father was murdered because it was allegedly reported that he

killed a cow. This instance reveals the uncharitable nature of the post- modern society. Daya Chand who witnessed the murder of his father later becomes an admirer of Saddam Hussain. He becomes so adulated by his courage that he starts to call himself Saddam Hussain. This veneration springs from his own inability to avenge his father's death. Roy presents the story of Saddam to depict the incongruousness that exists within the subaltern identity. There is no ordinance that brackets the extent of subaltern experience. The ordeals are diverse and distinct.

Roy explicates the subaltern status of Muslims in the Indian standpoint to widen the scope of subaltern studies. Ironically, Saddam uses his original name in few instances so as to avoid the bigotry treatment that he receives as a consequence of his Muslim fake name. The stuff addicts declare to Anjum that Muslims belong either in Pakistan or in the graveyard. The incident mirrors the inclination of post- modern society to exercise control over the minority. This yearning also traces humanity's decadence into the primitive instincts. Here, the sophistication of the conventional society is divulged as mere ostentatiousness.

Jannat doesn't exist in this plane. It is uncanonical in convention and execution. Jannat is an imaginative rendition of Roy's socialist ideals. She institutes a community for the socially suppressed. It is an autonomous body which provides economic and emotional sustenance for the disadvantaged. Its utopian attributes metaphorically crucify the atrocious nature of present society. It showcases aspirational traits that should be a benchmark for the future of humanity.

Unlike the members of the general public, Jannat residents have complex mental make-up. Because of the trauma that is triggered as a result of their subaltern existence, they suffer from "unmet dependency needs" (Van Nieuwenhove et al. 12). Yet they manage to create a safe space for each other. They venture beyond their psychological issues and champion the humanitarian pneuma. They are capable enough to comprehend each other's struggles without communication because their tenderness for each other is not conditional. Roy describes Nimmo Gorakhpuri's and Anjum's first meeting as a rebound of star crossed lovers. Other than their shared reality of being a transgender and a subaltern, they are complete strangers to each other. Yet, they display familial affinity towards each other. This is true for every resident of Jannat. They feel at home only in the company of each other.

According to Roy, the members of the Jannat house never choose to live in the graveyard. "It was the tide" (Roy 73) of 'collective trauma' that advanced them to this place. She portrays the crux of the life at Jannat in this way:

Once you have fallen off the edge like all of us have... you will never stop falling. And as you fall you will hold on to other falling people. The sooner you understand that the better. (Roy 72)

Roy's working model for subalterns is thus instituted on collective healing. For the underprivileged lot, Jannat is *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. This modus operandi functions without the interference of capitalist and hegemonic machinery. It is a community instituted by the disadvantaged people for the welfare of the disadvantaged people. The



founder of the Jannat has established this place without any Machiavellian agendas. In this way, Jannat is also a macrocosm of an ideal democratic state.

To conclude, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is a paradigm of subaltern narrative. The plot, characters, settings, conflict and resolution partakes the subaltern understanding of life. It is not a parochial account of the destitute which is written in order to engender sentimentalism. It is a true to life depiction of the unvoiced struggles, unsanitised feelings and unfiltered condition of underprivileged people. Roy encompasses multifarious sub-cultures that exist within the subaltern community and brings out the factors that unite them as a unit. Transgenders, orphans, Kashmiris, Muslims, Women and elderlies find representation in this framework. Her characters are living, breathing epitomes of subaltern archetypes. The nuts and bolts of the hegemonic system is explored without any sign of prejudice. Similarly, the fundamentals of the subaltern experience are also symbolically represented through the choice of settings. The Khwabgah, Jannat and Kashmir records the variant existential dilemmas that are faced by the disadvantaged lot. While the Khwabgah presents a short-term retreat from the terrors of the subaltern existence, Kashmir depicts the egregious peak of the subaltern experience. Jannat on the other hand, is a permanent working model for the survival and sustenance of the underprivileged people. Roy models Jannat based on her socialist philosophy of democracy and life. It is an epicentre of the subaltern discourse where centuries of collective trauma are absolved. Roy fashions this subaltern utopia as something the conventional society should aspire to be. She also censures the treatment of subalterns as dead-like. She reforms the grand narrative depiction of the disadvantaged people as nugatory and paltry. Roy shoulders the responsibility of being a mouthpiece to the subalterns and substantiates their horrendous quotidian life. She kindles readers to empathise with people who suffer. In this way, she reclaims the humanity of the subalterns.

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## Giving Voice to the Subaltern Women: A Study of Arupa Patangiya Kalita's *Felanee* and *Ayananta*

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### Abstract

*Women are supposed to be passive, inferior and dependent on their counterpart i.e. men and are often relegated to the position of the other. They are silenced throughout history as their stories are told by someone more powerful in position, credibility and mostly, gender role. It is mostly noticed that subaltern women by reason of their positional status and often disputed and politicized identity, lack the proper and genuine depiction of their lived realities and emotions in the narratives of literature too. Lacking their voice, they hover around misrepresentation or sometimes non-representation which creates a hollow space in between the reflected notion and the truth of their fates. Therefore, it appears as an interesting and significant question to see whether in any narrative, the subaltern women are given enough freedom to express themselves in their own language or whether it is possible to give voice to the subaltern women in any narration. This paper is an attempt to search for this same concern in the two novels Felanee and Ayananta by one of the notable Assamese writers, Arupa Patangiya Kalita. The woman characters here in these two novels are victims of the different patriarchal societal structures and norms, but they are neither submissive nor lost in their paths of life. The female characters in Felanee are further marginalized for their class and identity origin. Both these two novels are interesting documents of such women characters whose voices reach the ears of the readers. Therefore, this paper will further analyze whether the author has justifiably represented the subaltern women in these two select novels.*

**Keywords:** Subaltern, Other, Silence, Representation, Submissiveness.

The word 'subaltern' means 'an officer in the British army below the rank of captain, especially a second lieutenant' when it is used as a noun and anyone 'of lower status' when used as an adjective as defined by the Oxford dictionary. It was Antonio Gramsci, one of the most influential Marxist critics, who first coined this term in order to mean groups of people who are positioned under hegemonic strategy of more powerful groups of people. But, as a distinct genre of study, Subaltern studies developed only after the academic and purpose oriented activities executed by a bunch of academicians and historians led by Ranjit Guha. David Ludden in the introduction to *Reading Subaltern Studies* traces the trajectory of the development of subaltern studies as an area of study throughout the ages, right from its time



of initiation. He points out that “Subaltern studies began its impressive career in England at the end of the 1970s, when conversations on subaltern themes among a small group of English and Indian historians led to a proposal to launch a new journal in India” (1). But, as the time passed, it attained an Indian label due to its more inclination towards the colonial and postcolonial Indian subjects and themes. Moreover, there could be seen an ocean of contribution to this field from the Indian critics and scholars like Dipesh Chakravarty, Partha Chatterjee, Gyanendra Pandey, Binay Bhushan Choudhury, Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak and so on. However, Ludden asserts that “There is no one intellectual history of subalternity and never could be, because it lives on local ground in disparate readings” (17). Thus, subalternity and its study is not only a concern of a single country or society, but it is always present in every power structure containing one group which is more powerful and another which is supposed to be less powerful.

However, as Krupa Sandilya cites in his essay “Writing/Reading the subaltern woman: Narrative voice and subaltern agency in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s *English, August*”, “the narrative of subalternity is always already subsumed by the discursive power of patriarchy, imperialism and nationalism, which purport to both represent (in terms of politics) and re-present (in terms of artistic renditions) the subaltern subject” (Sandilya, 1). Keeping this context in view, the study of gender concern can also be made possible because, a clearly visible boundary line is drawn between the males and females on the basis of their sex, the culture and society where they live. Females are the supposed inferiors in this space who often gets muted and marginalized because of the over dominance of patriarchal inclinations. This marginalization is intensified if they belong to any subaltern group, be it racial, economic, cultural or ethnic. Such groups of people are intentionally or politically relegated to a space of nothingness or rather their voices are not let to be heard throughout the process of writing and framing history.

Women who experience subordination for their gender identity, is doubly silenced and victimized because of which critics like Gayatri C. Spivak, Kamala Visweswaran, Tejaswini Niranjana and their followers brought forth gender under the study of subalternity. Women are demoted to a subaltern space which is “characterized by its invisibility and externality to capitalism” (22) as observed by D’ Angello about Spivak’s considerate approach of subaltern space in her essay “Subaltern and Marginal Figures in Literature”. For Spivak, a subaltern space is the position of those ‘removed from all lines of social mobility’ and ‘inhabits the space of difference’ (19) as cited by D’ Angello in her above cited essay. Thus, women are subalterns not only because of the gendered identity, but also because of the fact of their being disregarded and state of disconnection essentially from the overall social narrative. Apart from the common experiences of suffering, women have layers of separate and distinguished experiences of subjugation, submissiveness and the state of being the Other, as they are bound to inhabit in a deserted space only meant for them. They lack proper representation in history as well as in any national narrative.

Their stories are partially reflected or incorrectly documented because; they themselves are not provided the ground to tell the tales of their own self. It is someone other



who undertakes this task, that someone who is always superior to them in position, power and identity. In such documents, the women characters seem to accept their state of being a marginal character as they are seldom given a voice which is further stated by Spivak in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” as:

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the “third world woman” caught between tradition and modernization. (306)

Spivak, though discusses these concerns in the context of post colonialism and imperialism and as a reaction to Guha’s concept of subaltern study, her assertions are very significant to understand the condition of subaltern women both theoretically and practically. Her statement about the impossibility of the subalterns’ speaking of their own selves is groundbreaking as it not only sensitizes the perspective towards the subaltern people but also paves way for further research to see whether any alternate aspect is traceable or not.

However, Spivak herself discusses the possibility of finding such an alternate way whereby the subalterns can be given a space to voice themselves and it is literature for that sake. Any literary text is distinguishable from historical documents because, here the authors exercise the authority to let the characters speak about themselves in their own diction and move according to their own desire inside the text. The authors are just mouthpieces for them who help in painting their stories in the authentic way. Thus, it can be stated that subaltern women can also apparently get their voices echoed in literature just like Spivak believes that literature can provide a platform to female characters to express their selves. Isabella D’ Angelo in her above cited essay discusses Spivak’s understanding of a literary text where she says that “Spivak insists on texts’ capacity to let the subaltern woman remain incommensurable, rather than a symbol for something else or a conceptual figure. This is achieved through a valuable creation of a space for subalternity”(19).

So, literature creates an uncorrupted space for the subalterns where they can exercise their right to speak for themselves, thereby helping their stories to reach the readers of the mainstream narratives. This paper attempts to see whether the two selected novels by Arupa Patangiya Kalita serve purposefully in giving voice to the subaltern women. If yes, how the writer has created that subject space for the women characters to let them be the speakers of their own stories so as to enliven the true picture of those women’s lives.

Arupa Patangiya kalita, an amazing story teller from the Northeast India, has contributed many short stories and novels which are beautifully crafted in the author’s signature narrative style. Her fictional writings are rich with the local and regional rudiments of the Northeast, its culture, sociological realities, historical details and the kind of human relationship the people share in this specific landmass. Thematically, her texts are pregnant with meanings and stylistically, they are more enriching because, they provide multiple dimensions to justify and dissect her stories to see whether they employ the age old traditional narrative structures or they promote experimental modern narrative styles to explore her world. The two selected novels *Ayananta* and *Felanee* fit into this juncture of the



author's approach which further makes possible a study of subalternity in both the two texts. The female characters in both these two novels differ from one another in their courage, strength and the stances they take for their own selves. Some of them are very much active and vocal in their prospect of life and some are silent and patient sufferers of the pitiful conditions of their lives which they accept unquestionably as their fates. But, they commonly experience subalternity of different intensity. Firstly, none of them got a mention in any historical testimony as they hail from some remote rural or semi-urban areas. Secondly, they are marginalized humans whose life stories are left unraveled; thereby pushing them towards an insignificant subaltern position. Thirdly, they are subalterns both for their gender identity and the ethnicity and class they represent. The female characters in *Ayananta* are of two categories: the first includes the maternal aunts of the protagonist, Ruma Baideo, the wife of the freedom struggler, the protagonist's mother who seems to be accepting their lives as it appeared to them. They are neither seen to be claiming their rights nor questioning the confining norms and rituals.

They seemingly compromise and surrender to the life given to them by the culture and society they are part of. The second category is constituted of the characters like the protagonist Binapani, her grandmother Josoda, Jeuti, Bogi and Tagar. Binapani is comparatively vocal about her own emotions and opinions and is a non conformist character. She is trapped in the clutch of patriarchy. Her wills and aspirations are all disregarded by her own family members in an attempt to rectify her ways as a perfect woman in the eyes of the society. But, she never retracted from expressing herself in any condition for which most of her family members criticized her. She of course, had to surrender by marrying a much older man whom she disliked, but she stopped accepting her servitude after her two children were born. She is projected as the subject in her own story that has made the readers to get engaged with the narrative she has provided. The author does so by letting her to speak in her own language, to express her shifting moods, her emotions; thereby erecting a smooth path to enter into the life of a subaltern. Binapani is subaltern due to her gender which she denies to confirm to and comes up with her decision to leave her family and start her life anew. She says: "I have thought about my own self. I have observed so much of women's lives. It is said that women's lives are always submissive to father, husband and their sons..." (*Ayananta* 263).

During her childhood, she always questioned her grandfather about the real cause and essence of the rituals and customs the women had to practice. She sometimes denied to conform to such norms and sometimes argued with the elders. Her humanitarian spirit though was never appreciated by anyone, made her see things differently. She even developed a liking towards a boy from a lower class who became a missionary and roamed around places by spreading knowledge among people. She met her secretly, dreamt of their future but had to refrain. The newer version of her life is worthier as she daringly leaves her servitude to others and wakes up to a new life meant for her own self. She takes up the responsibility of Ruma Baideo's illegitimate child, Tagar and helps her attain what she herself couldn't. Likewise, Bogi, the illegitimate daughter of Haitha Sorai, the richest man in that locality, is



strong enough to face her life. She knows her past and discusses openly about it with Binapani and even expresses her disdain towards everyone who teases her for that cause. She remains the silent volcano who stores the stories of evil tendency and the character of that renowned and honored man, who was her biological father. Jeuti, the woman who was looked down upon by the society for acting in cinema and having a relationship with a lawyer who is a widower and has a son, never wasted her time thinking about the stereotypical society around her and shows the courage to confront the gossips about her among people as she says: “I am not going to ask for the society. I will stay with the lawyer only...” (208). Moreover, Josoda, Binapani’s maternal grandmother, was that kind of a woman who chose to remain silent but, never withdrew her decisions at any cost. She took the charge of adopting the illegitimate child of Ruma Baideo though she was severely criticized by her husband, her sons and daughters-in-law. She announced her decision: “If humans don’t spoil her, this flower is not worm eaten. The God has not created her defective. I will adopt this child. She will live helping you do your works.” (112). She even went to help the freedom fighter’s family who were starving and living a poor, pathetic life; that too against the consent of the other family members.

Binapani too, during her youth, assisted her in this regard. She trembled to see the poor plight of that family and expressed her helplessness as she couldn’t help them uplift their status of life. She often questioned her grandfather why always the good people had to suffer, why there were fixed norms only for the women and so on. Thus, these women have not only uplifted their lives from the position of a subaltern through their words and actions. Here the concept of *relational subjectivation* is relevant. D’ Angello in the above cited essay discusses that *subjectivation* are relational because it requires “sympathetic storytelling” and a “responsible reading” (21). She states that “The process through which the subaltern character becomes a subject requires the intervention of a storyteller and a sympathetic reader” (21). Patangiya Kalita has rightly employed subjectivation in *Ayananta* as she has created the perfect ambience for her female characters to express their lives. The comparatively stronger females doesn’t only speak about themselves but, the readers also get glimpses of the lives of the lesser vocal female characters through their behavioral pattern, their state of being and their reactions towards their own lives. Thus, this novel has rightly given voice to a group of subaltern women in the pre-independence time who suffer due to their gender identity.

A discussion of *Felanee* will also put forward the same notion of subjectivation but, subaltern identities of the women here are far more crucial to explore. The women here are not subaltern only due to their gender, but for their class and group identity. The title of the novel itself is as provocative as it literally means “to throw away”. The novel is a saga of stories of a large group of vulnerable women who solely earn for their families. They are poor but independent. They are some dislocated women during one of the agitations in their land who settle down in a slum area and built up their own territory. Monir Ma, Ratnar Ma, Minoti, Kali Burhi, Jaggu’s wife and so many women with the same destiny has determined to put off the veil of femininity and the coyness; thereby they have fulfilled the first condition





of their being subaltern. Their gender identity no longer promotes them as subalterns. The market place portrayed in the setting of the novel is the liberating and equalizing space for these women. They prepare handmade snacks, handcrafted pieces of furniture, sweets and various other items to sell in the market just like all the male sellers. Still, they are targeted and victimized by the insurgents and also by those people of the higher class and caste co-inhabiting with them in that locality. Some women of this group are from minority group, some are of tribal community and some are altogether without any identity. Their lifestyle and living standard is never up to the mark. They earn in daily basis and have to starve if they don't succeed in selling their products.

Thus, their subalternity now is due to economic cause, due to the unjust societal structures and the conflict amid the haves and the have-nots. Monir Ma or Felanee is confused to have experienced the unexpected turns in her life but, she is not indecisive. She made her mind to bring out her child from the lavatory of camps after they lost their house in the agitation. She is encouraged more by Kali Burhi as we see her saying: "Women must be just like this chilli. It looks small but can burn severely when tasted" (*Felanee*, 61). Kali Burhi, though thin, is a woman of a manly voice and spirit. She is a worshipper of the Hindu Goddess Kali who was courageous enough to compete with men and conquer the evil powers. She foretells about people which earns her the livelihood. Moreover, she inspires and helps other helpless women in her locality by showing them means of earning, giving them solution to their problems and the like. Minati is the mother of a son by one of the agitators who never accepted her socially. He spends nights in her hut to hide from the authority.

Minati never disclosed it to anyone though none remained ignorant of the fact. Ratna's mother, Felanee and all the other women kept the secret because they knew that man and all the other insurgents are so powerful people. They kill people by blasting bombs, rob the houses and shops, and announce *bandh* for days after days if their conditions are not fulfilled. These women and all the other inhabitants of this slum have learnt to adapt to the traumatic times caused by such power mongers. Lives of the other women in the slum are also explained in an intriguing manner with the same intricacy by the author which is an attempt of the author to highlight the plight of those subaltern women. The author has promoted these women as the spokespersons of their lives, for which she has not only let them exercise their liberty within the text but also, narrate their stories altogether in a chorus so as to provide the proper representation of the lives of subaltern women in a small slum area in the Northeast. They have learnt to become independent and cooperative because, they understood that their lives will continue to exist if only they remain united on the face of the frequent agitations and insurgencies. The author's real life experience with these women has made her capable of presenting them in a perfectly authentic manner.

The novelist leaves no aspect of these women's lives unexplored and she does it with utmost concern as if by paraphrasing their words into a fiction. The readers sense the genuine zest of the emotions and feelings of each and every character in these two novels, thereby making them engaged with the stories. No omnipresent authorial control over the storyline can be noticed; rather the readers will witness vibrant landscapes with lively characters

communicating with one another in their usual caricature. Her use of content specific diction, the register used by the two bunches of women belonging to two different classes and societies; employment of regional and cultural details and projection of lively characters contributes to this endeavor. The readers are not only provided with two narratives with women characters as subjects, but in that venture, she has also introduced a lineage of strong women in the remote Northeastern landscape of Assam. Their experience of subalternity is incomparable for their existential identity, their positional discrepancies, the socio-economic unrest in their land and the set of cultural baggage they carry. The women are capable of perceiving and accepting the prevailing political events. They even safeguard so many secrets of such conflicts in them. Here, they are not simply the eyewitness to the events around them but, they are critics of it. Thus, these two novels have brilliantly dealt with subalternity and have given an otherwise estimation of what Spivak stated in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” that the subalterns cannot speak (104).

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## Nostalgia, Home and Belonging: A Diasporic Reading of *Before We Visit the Goddess* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

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### Abstract

*This paper “Nostalgia, Home and Belonging: A Diasporic Reading of Before We Visit the Goddess by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni” examines the major theoretical approaches to the diaspora, as well as the concept of home and belonging and nostalgia. This novel revolves around the lives of three generations of women Sabitri, Bela, and Tara, and their strong bond even after getting apart from each other. Their lives are filled with pathos, pain, dreams, desires, and alienated belongingness. It focuses on the resistance these women confront generation after generation. The paper also explores the role of nostalgia in diasporic and its role in creating the sense of home and belonging in the characters.*

**Keywords:** Belongingness, Diaspora, Home, and Nostalgia.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a diasporic writer. Born in India, Kolkata, and currently resides in Houston. She has written several novels such as *Mistress of Spices*, *Before we Visit the Goddess*, *Arranged Marriage*, *Sister of My Heart*, *Queen of Dreams*, *Palace of Illusion*, *One amazing Thing*, etc., her fictions have been translated into 29 languages including Dutch, Hebrew, Indonesian, Bengali, Turkish and Japanese. Her novel *The Mistress of Spices* was made into an English film, the novel *Sister of My Heart* was made into a Tamil TV serial, a short story, "The Word Love," from the collection *Arranged Marriage*, was made into a bilingual short.

*Before We Visit the Goddess* is a story of the migration and dislocation of Bela, daughter of Sabitri and mother of Tara. One can notice the loneliness, longing, and nostalgia in the life of Bela who lives in the United States with her husband Sanjay and daughter Tara. Bela's mother Sabitri's life is also filled with loneliness and nostalgia about living in India. Sabitri is not happy with Bela's elopement with Sanjay and marrying him and the further movement to the US with him. The story begins with Sabitri, the grandmother writing a letter to her granddaughter about not quitting her education. Through her letter, she narrates the untold stories of her life. The story also ends with Tara reading the letter written by her grandmother.



This paper focuses on the idea of nostalgia, home, and belonging by analyzing the novel *Before We Visit the Goddess*. Boym's representation of nostalgia suits the best to explain the emotions of the characters in the novel *Before We Visit the Goddess*. Boym's presentation helps in understanding an individual. The two types of Nostalgia according to Boym are:

1. Restorative Nostalgia
2. Reflective Nostalgia

"Restorative nostalgia puts emphasis on nostos and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps" (Boym 42). Restorative Nostalgia is going back to the past or the memories of home by recreating the memories of home and longing. Restoring the past gives a great relief.

"Reflective nostalgia dwells in algia, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance" (Boym 42). This type of nostalgia lingers on materials like the ruins of the past. It centers on longing and made to accept that past is past. It does not rebuild the home, this type of nostalgia is aware of the gap in between the identity and resemblance.

These distinctions can be analyzed in the novel *Before We Visit the Goddess* by Divakaruni. The character Sabitri is a daughter of a poor baker in rural Bengal. She longs to get educated but it is an impossible mission for her because of her family's economic condition. But fortunately, she gets to study as a rich lady who comes forward to sponsor her studies. But this lasts longer as she falls in love with the rich lady's son Ravi, this incident changed her whole life. She is forbidden and at last, she is taken care of by her professor and ended up marrying him as he wishes to marry her. Her trouble doesn't stop by then, it continued throughout her life. She loses her husband and son in a fire accident and has been left stranded. She decides to return to the parental home and runs a sweet stall in her mother's name in her remembrance. She now lives in rural Bengal and is reminded of her past and gets great relief that she gets the same identity as her mother. She says that: "She died when I was in Assam.' I could not even be at her deathbed; I was so tangled in my trouble then. But through Durga sweets, I'll make her into a household name in Kolkata" (Divakaruni, 87).

Analyzing the different kinds of nostalgia by Svetlana Boym, the character Sabitri is a perfect example of "Restorative Nostalgia". She longs to have a sweet stall as her mother had; she returns to her native and sets up a sweet stall in the name of her mother in her remembrance. Thus restoring the past gives her great relief.

The second and third Generation women; Sabitri's daughter Bela and Sabitri's granddaughter Tara are perfect examples of "Reflective Nostalgia". After Sabitri's death, both Bela and Tara read the letter along with the photo written by Sabitri. She narrates her life incidents in the letter. Tara likes the photo of her grandmother and wishes to keep it for herself as her remembrance but Bela doesn't approve of it. But somehow she manages to take the photo without knowing Bela, but she finds it out.

"What is in your hand"

I offer up the photo, feeling much like a four-year-old caught with my hand in the cookie jar.

My mother stares at it, then at me, anger replacing the surprise on her face  
Were you taking it? After I had told you, no? Taking my mother's picture, which  
would have given me a little comfort in that mausoleum? (203)

The photo remains to be the only heirloom for both Bela and Sabitri; they wanted to have that photo in the memory of Sabitri. They both do not want to return to India as they have adapted to fit themselves in the alien country even though they do not have a very good job. They have learned to survive by doing petty jobs to fill in their stomachs.

Analyzing the forms of nostalgia; the characters are pretty well developed to convey their nostalgia as well the problem they faced in their life. The author takes characters from rural Bengal to modern life in America. Tara is the exact opposite of her grandmother as Tara looks backward and the previous generations like Sabitri and Bela look forward to betterment in their life. Tara dreams differently. The following passage from the letter written by Sabitri to Tara shows how Sabitri looks forward to the world; "*Granddaughter, people look down on a woman without education. She has a few options. To survive, she is forced to put up with ill-treatment. She must depend on the kindness of strangers, an unsure thing. I do not want that for you—*" (8).

The nostalgia of multi-generational women in the novel is brought out beautifully by the author throughout the novel through various incidents. Nostalgia, home, and belonging is an important tool in diasporic writing. The Svetlana Boym forms of nostalgia aim on nostalgia as an individual's emotions. Thus the author has brought out the Nostalgia, home, and belonging in her novel through the characters and the incidents.

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## Intricacies of the Feudal Social Hierarchy in the Short Stories of Mamang Dai's "The Road" and Devanur Mahadeva's "Tar Arrives"

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### Abstract

*The quote, 'Old is dying and the new cannot be born' is very appropriate to the two short stories Mamang Dai's "The Road" and Devanur Mahadeva's "Tar Arrives" selected for discussion in this paper. The stories detail the landscapes and people of a remote village set in North India and in South India. Weighing more on the contemporary issues of social, economic and cultural progressions- opposing the influences of a new culture, act of resistance to retain its cultural Identity-the paper extricates the paradox involved. Modernity does not deal with elemental issues of a village or the complex ongoing in the minds of the people of the village (the changes they witness in the global world) that confront the present generation which toss their lives and customs into trepidation. "Tar Arrives" is an observation on the struggle within religious and secular values between the Patel and the four young men Lakuma, Rajappa, Madu and Shambu. "The Road" reveals the social stigma (the road brings thieves, outsiders, disease) towards change which is brought out through Larik who articulates apprehensions of modernity that comes with road, telephone connections, electricity etc. Both the stories expose the facts detailing around the progression with tarring/ the Road acting as a metaphor and measured out against a disaster -accidental death of a child in "Tar Arrives", landslide in "The Road".*

**Keywords:** Modernity, Feudal hierarchy, Belief, Mamang Dai, Devanur Mahadeva.

The short stories "Tar Arrives" and "The Road" uses the tarring the road as a metaphor of Modernism, that is adapting to the changes of the times, where change is obligatory and is the law of time and nature. The people of the two stories believe in the dynamics of society. Nevertheless, how they perceive the changes around them and the way they blend/assimilate with it; not only create groups but also create problems. Subsequently, it questions the long standing feudal social hierarchy which acted as the pillar at different times in the Indian history (Tar Arrives).

The innumerable effects of modern fluctuations on people and society that make them vulnerable like: the robbery in the village in "The Road" was considered a taboo by the village people. Luda convinces the villages to press for an inquiry to catch the culprits. Duan had taken personal interest to solve it. Later in the story, when Larik destroys the road, causing landslide that smash chunks of the road, further heavy storm shook the fringed thatch of the longhouses of the village-which depict the hard life the village had to live with, Luda is





seen dancing in the rain because he had witnessed such various incidents in his life. He says, “Hadn’t it survived for so long?” “Wouldn’t it survive these winds of change as well?”

In “Tar Arrives” Patel is not very happy with the four boys- who have revolutionary ideas after studying from nearby town. They are the first ones to raise voice against any discrimination in the village. They write to the editor of a newspaper about the Patel’s plan to misuse the money, which upset Patel in turn affecting the village. After the story of the dirty young women going to the police station after being humiliated by the villagers shared by the Hosur passer-by made rounds in the village. Patel instead of humiliating the four boys at the chavadi, front of the villagers, goes straight to the police station to complain about the misplaced tar (outside the village, around a pit with mouths wide open). Adding to that was the missing child of Rangappa, his body completely smeared with tar was lying in the pit. “Plot grew darker and darker and as the village waited for night to fall, there was yet another thing that would come to pass” (Tar Arrives).

Luda and Patel represent the earlier generation who have witnessed changes and how the feudal system adapted to them (changes). The village Gowda and Patel (Tar Arrives) Isaam and Luda (The Road) think they understand the society better than the younger generation, hold on to it- with their advices and control, calling for meeting (chavadi or kebang) giving their decisions. The importance of such meeting and the respect it held can be understood in the following words:

Kebang was the shining institution of these villages that solved all disputes and dispensed justice. Under the shade of the trees a group of men would assemble... recognised for their knowledge and honesty, their courage and their powers of oratory. Sometimes a case could drag on for years and even carry over into the next generation. Yet there was always a council of men to take over and assemble again under the trees to distil words, explore human psychology, and weigh and measure right against wrong in a long exercise of logic and compassion. (Luda)

With education, new policies by the government, people of the village visiting other places for education, jobs... along with the modern means of communication (media) people are exposed to the global world -creating a complex society difficult to comprehend by one system and wait for solution through chavadi and kebang. By the time the older generation comprehended this and acted on it, the younger generation were quick to understand and act on those issues. They are much more open to changes and impressionable, for the progress of the village.

When Patel decides to use the remaining money of the government contract for making a tar road, to renovate the village temple, the youngsters (whom the Patel disapprove off) question Patel’s ethics challenging the existing hierarchy, that believed in oratory skill- they could control people’s thoughts by the use of the right words. However, to the on lookers it seems a conflict between religious and secular values, nevertheless modern complex challenges of socialistic values - that positions new demanding problems -culture specific- are brushed aside. Issam had sleepless nights worrying about somebody intruding their sacred places, it turns out right, when the granary doors were wrecked. Accusing the



road for the source for the happening in the village. Duan, the youngest elected state assembly member representing the government of the village (becomes an outsider too), though he assures them to restore the village jewels, he was looked at apprehensively. Luda acknowledges Duan and convinces him of his and the village support. He also warns/instructs Larik and the youngers to join hand with Duan. But Larik has his reservations, he does not want to be mesmerised by Duan's words- promising his people that he would move "heaven and earth to get to the bottom of it, but no one must take the law into their own hands".

This 'new culture' representing Duan and the four youngsters, who represent the larger system (government/laws) in the short stories expose a new space in which people find themselves speechless to function in the absence of cultural stabilizers. The stories open describing the landscape- the roads are narrow difficult to trudge: hedged in on both sides by cacti, meanders around the banyan grove in which the spirits reside, forks into three and then runs the village where the houses stand so close that seem to choke each other. (Tar Arrives) "This is the last village on the administrative map. Anyone looking at the hills from the highest point in it would see the river coiled like a shimmering snake in the still, green jungle, beyond which rose a forbidding knot of mountains. It was a landscape out of dream... (The Road).

This description of the villages show that people of these villages had its own rhythm for centuries. They were trying to stick on to the old certainties and beliefs at different times, during the course of their history in that place, until the road was proposed. Now things were beyond one's prediction. In Mamang Dai's "The Road" the road was being built for a year now.

It ran up the mountain like a broken ladder of crumbling earth stained with iron ore. The red gash turned in great loops and bends and plunged into the heart of the far mountains, trying to reach the scattered villages buried deep in the land of mist and wild chestnut.

Exposing the village as well as the people of the village to the people coming from far of places to make the road, which gave room for exchange of ideas and life- bringing in new challenges. New faces from far away came to work, these labourers settled amidst the dense plumes reassuring themselves; bamboo tube was fixed to draw water which was better than any taps in the towns, boulders served as laundry stones, women bathed while the passing men stared at the wet clothes that hugged their bodies. These exploitations of nature and situation made the local men of the village fume in anger and plunged them to take decisions which could not be comprehended. Seeing these changes around them, it was apparent for the village people not to heed to Duan's promise to restore the village to its old sanctity.

In Devanur Mahadeva's "Tar Arrives" the road has been sanctioned and the Patel is given the contract. Even before the road begins the village celebrates that they would be getting work for many months and need not worry, also the promise that the remaining money will be used to renovate the temple. This shows that the Patel is clever in calculating the means to save money to strengthen his position and the belief of the village, through his oratory and tactful skills. But his skills (authority) could not convince the four youngsters



who had completed high school from the neighbouring cities, having more exposure of different ways of approaching a situation against the age-old system (tactful in manipulating to times and situation).

These two incidents can be referred to what Luda says, honesty and goodness were of no use in the world Duan (The Road) or the four youngsters (Tar Arrives) had entered. “To get things done a person had to use stealth and patience, like setting a trap. ‘you have to lure us like fish, like deer. You have to use words sweet like oiled wood.’” (The Road) It is only Duan (the youngest elected member to the state assembly) in the story “The Road”, who speaks progressively and Mayum his girlfriend trusts him. He is sincere and wants to see his village and people progress. He takes effort to push through the process for the road to be complete; for the vehicles can ply on them, to bring telephone line, electricity and new schools-for children to learn “in the new brightness that would pierce their dim homes like a sharp ray of light” (The Road). The drawbacks of this thought process (dream of Duan) on people and village (the real world) towards progress was not comprehend by Duan which is mentioned by Larik “He has no idea about the situation” (The Road). The people of the village were in distress, until this day they had not witnessed any robbery but now, the granary doors ransacked all their precious bead and jewels stolen. They were dumbstruck and beyond consolation. The group with Larik (decided) takes it on them to protect the place themselves. They feel exposed with the coming of the road, than to believe in progress through the tarring of the road. They target to destroy the road and are successful in their action. Larik and his small group who engage in this action, thinking that they were doing this for the good of the village, fulfilling the dream of the earlier generation (keeping the village/nature safe from intruders). This former generation, who were fading away, wasting because the earlier war and valour had nothing to do with people surrendering their ancestral lands to the government.

The famous Buddhist proverb says “In each loss there is a gain, as in every gain there is a loss, and with each ending comes a new beginning.” During that process is required patience but do the present generation comprehend the circumstances well or is it possible at all to comprehend, so that they can wait in patience.

Larik expresses his fear that the government cannot do anything on its own, the road that was coming up now- after fifty years of their struggle in that village- was bringing in outsiders, thieves, disease. He also wonders why in the present state the village cannot be improved. “Wait, they say all the time. Everything takes time, they say” (The Road). He also compares the city he had visited that the roads in the capital were worse than the one being built there, nothing much is done there (in cities) and he wonders how the authorities (Duan) promise the village better facilities. Larik is concerned that the authorities have no knowledge about the people of this far away village (last in the administrative map), as to how they live and who they are. He dreaded that the road and the things that came with it strangled them and threatened to steal “their identity like a thief creeping into their villages and fields”.

This statement was true to nature- the landscape as well- nature is destroyed in the name of progress: The dense mat of banyan trees was razed to the ground- machines, stone

wheels belching smoke run around these places now- this destruction is a fascinating site for the people of the villages, who are still the same people, “what they were” but have changed beyond recognition (tar smeared all over them) (Tar Arrives). The hills echoed the sound of heavy trucks bumping, screeching up the hillside carrying iron and cement. They scraped the riverbed for sand, blew up rocks that hung over the cut earth, menacing to smash the bulldozers and workmen who blew whistles and ran like ants on the edge of the mountain. (The Road)

And when this progress “The Road” was force stopped by few miscreants; the nature and people were affected again. Tar drums were drawn outside the village its mouth open, the tar drained into a pit, Rangappa’s kid was stuck in the tar, struggled to survive (Tar Arrives). After Larik had doused the road with a small plastic hose, overhang of road moved and cracked, as the earth that trust up the roots of the old tree fell down the mountain and hit the road, “Larik thought, ‘The old tree is weeping’”

The few benefits of tarring the road- tar is used for plugging leaking pots, children play amidst the tar and machines, sticky tar shut crying children as they put the tar smeared hands to their mouth to wipe out. The elders also wonder at the miracle of road making, the process and the things (various machines) used. (Tar Arrives)

The village in Mamang Dai’s “The Road” worries about the safety of their houses. Throughout that, they witness the stories of faraway places “young boys were robbing the supermarkets in town and teenagers were extorting money and riding away on stolen motorcycles. In the plains, migrant workers prowled at night planning burglaries and murder”. The contract of various work- tarring, electricity, telephone connection... were not given to the people of the village, nor these people are taken for those work (work is undertaken in their village). These incidents and more make them realise that there are no spirits, these spirits have no role to play in most of the condition that people had experienced/endured in the village.

In both the stories tarring the road opens up the pandoras box (a present which seems valuable but which in reality is a curse), the short coming of their own people. This also evidences that it is not one (few) person, his thoughts that can bring in progress to a village, but it requires a collective effort.

‘How do you know he will?’ Issam had shouted quite loudly. He had promised us water and nothing has been done. The labourers are drinking it all up!... Duan is our own boy, but after all, he can’t do everything!’- for the first time in the village voices had been raised in dissent. The elders and young men had begun to argue”.

In both the stories people of the village worry about their image from an onlooker/outside. They dream to be a model village, prove their potential, individually as well as a village. After the letter to the editor is read out in the village in “Tar Arrives”, Patel calls for a meeting, when nothing favourable turns out in the meeting and after the news of the dirty women brought in from a neighbouring man coming from Hosur- rounding off the landlords, Patel goes straight to the police station and surrenders his position of authority - when the tar went missing drawn outside the village-destroyed, (Tar Arrives). In “The Road”



Duan says Luda about the opinion of his village people in the town that they are most intractable, don't help themselves, only know to protest. Many others (from different villages) like Duan working sincerely according to the times, trying to bridge the old ways of living to the new life styles (with the changing times) were disappointed after this turn of events – road being destroyed, electric poles missing, personally hurt for their earnest efforts, afraid that even after doing so much their integrity would be questioned. They had no choice but to shield themselves from their villages, stop visiting their village as they were busy on different project in other villages, cold towards their people when they visit them for favours.

The bridge breaking is metaphorical, once the same bridge helped people connect to the towns and find new ways/hopes of living (The Road). Now the breaking of the bridge represents the present generation does not have such a treat/ a ray hope too. They continue to rot in their old outdated system. The only possibility is not only to fix the bridge connecting villages but to fix the gap between the minds of people towards improvement. In “Tar Arrives” the writer uses lot of words that conveys gloomy prognosis of the story the way it ends- “the dim light from within the house fell out of the windows and was lost in the darkness”. “The Patel clenched his fist and stood up like a shot- hit the lantern, broke the glass ...the lantern flickered until it finally died out, plunging the whole place into darkness. Pandemonium ensued”. “...after they had watched and watched, and the blackness of it filled their eyes, they would slowly move away. Nobody had a word to say”. “Plot grew darker and darker and as the village waited for night to fall, there was yet another thing that would come to pass”.

The only mistake that the village had approved by their people till then was troubling young men or young girls (teasing them). “Everyone is waiting for those boys to be caught harassing some girl” “It was her practice to seduce all the teenaged boys of the village”. The punishment to that mistake was to flog them to their underpants, as was executed to the dirty women of the neighbouring village. But the new enlightenment of the four men because of their exposure was beyond the village people's imagination.

In “The Road” the colour red/ heart, different colours to express their emotion as with nature, few destructions to nature- they were guilty of it, is expressed and people laughing to brush off their plight is repeated. Colour red to indicate feeling of inauspicious at some places- “the red gash turned in great loops and bends and plunged into the heart of the far mountains, trying to reach the scattered villages buried deep in the land of mist and wild chestnut”, “mad woman made red by the gouged-out earth threw bits of shale and rock at travellers”, “Everybody believed in the story of the red pool, the colour of the blood, where ghostly fish swam round and round wearing bells that tinkled and drove strong men to acts of murderous violence. In the summer rains the road was crushed under falling rocks and boulders. The villagers clambered over them and laughed loudly, wading through the sticky red mud”, “new brightness that would pierce their dim homes like a sharp ray of light”, “the village seemed to stop breathing. The clear air shimmered and the long houses shone like crouched monoliths with their fringe of wild plantain neatly trimmed over the narrow doorways”, “from her dark door Issam jangled”,





The mention of different shades is brought out to express different feelings and union with nature: “They followed the green and silver vein of the river”, “Yellow light glinting in their eyes”, “Orange trees grew here, the bamboo was young and rain-washed” “families who arrived moved in a daze of wonderment- memorizing the green stillness”, “river coiled like a shimmering snake in the still, green jungle, beyond which rose a forbidding knot of mountains”, “across the river the white sand banks stretched and narrowed, before they were swallowed by the darkness where spiked bamboo stood in silent columns”, “walked through the forests carrying bamboo flares”, “They cut plantain stems and lashed them together into rafts to get across”. “Thunderstruck victims”, “Now stop sowing poison!” “It was a landscape out of dream, and though an onlooker might pause and get his bearing, sooner or later the impenetrable vastness would trouble his thoughts”, “tallest hills and the most secret mountains began. The villages remained mysterious and remote. They were beyond time. Till the road came”.

“They would exchange words and looks that kept them laughing and happy all through the long summers”, “if there was laughter and singing, like this...”, “then he stopped and laughed when he saw Luda prancing around stiff-legged before him”. Luda’s dream also has significance: walking in an unknown land, full of rocks ...saw big red flowers blooming on the rocks. He concludes his dream saying that: “we will grow old drinking drinks and die in a state of happiness. Hah, ha, ha!”

The story “The Road” also informs (a caution) in a song, that the young men are not wedded, the young beauties run away from them as they see thorns on their hand -indicates the youngsters are engaged in wrong adulterous activities. The feudal social hierarchy, which was previously a required and the only way of living, is broken to pieces; the village which was content with its simple way of living gets shattered with the introduction of the road and other things that come with it. Changing the face of the village, assorting their beliefs, habits, value system, human relationships, customs, and practices of people. This leads to extremities which need immediate reconfiguration in the cultural co-ordinates of the village as the feudal social hierarchy- its basis is quizzed.

The short stories reveal that any approach towards change is bipolar in its nature. It pinpoints the innate contradictory factor whether to resist /oppose change or to embrace change, making people’s life difficult to make the right choice, because they have to live with the choice they make as the consequences of their action cannot be altered. The act of resistance to the swamping influences of new culture, aids in preserving long standing native/local identity, which is required to an individual to feel a sense of belonging to the place he lives in (belongs). The village elders representing the Patel and others in the “Tar Arrives”, Larik and Issam and the disillusioned village people in “The Road”. The changing times do not support such resistance.

On the other hand, trying to embrace/opposing new hopes and progressive action seems rebellious or a desperate affair which is clearly evident in the four young men -the extremities is brought out in the stories. The characters in both the short stories after the consequences of their action are caught up in this dilemma- the dilemma creating pensive



Hamletian mood, powerless to make their choice. The quote, “Old is dying and the new cannot be born” seem appropriate to the two short stories Mamang Dai’s “The Road” and Devanur Mahadeva’s “Tar Arrives” selected for discussion in this paper. Weighing more on the contemporary issues of social, economic and cultural progressions- opposing the influences of a new culture, act of resistance to retain its cultural Identity-the paper extricates the paradox involved. It is made very profound in this study, that modernity does not deal with the elemental issues of a village or the complex ongoing in the minds of the people of the village (the changes they witness in the global world) that confront the present generation, tossing their lives and customs into trepidation.

“Tar Arrives” reflects not only the struggle within religious and secular values, but also the complex changes through the modern influences and education between the Patel/the people of the village and the four young men Lakuma, Rajappa, Madu and Shambu. “The Road” reveals the social stigma (the road brings thieves, outsiders, disease) towards change which is brought out through Larik, who articulate apprehensions of modernity that comes with road, telephone connections, electricity ... he tries to save his village from external influences, not realizing that by stopping such influences stops their growth as well.

Both the stories expose the facts detailing around the progression with tarring/ the Road acting as a metaphor and measured out against a disaster -accidental death of a child in “Tar Arrives”, landslide, disconnecting all means of connections with the outsiders in “The Road”.

Chinua Achebe’s statement, life just has to go on, and if you refuse to accept changes, then tragic though it may be, you are swept aside, seem very accurate to the two stories discussed here.

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## Diasporic Literature with Special Reference to Kiran Desai

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### Abstract

*Diaspora is not a new concept in literature; it is as old as the human race. The word 'Diaspora' is everywhere. In the past, it refers to the dispersal and exile of the Jews. But in the twentieth century, the term turned to the involuntary dispersal of other populations. Because of this dispersion, they face many challenges in other countries. These problems are stated by many writers in their works. Kiran Desai is one of those writers who wrote about immigrants' difficulties. This paper analyzes Kiran Desai's work 'The inheritance of loss' from this point of view.*

**Keywords:** Kiran Desai, Diaspora, Alienation, Society, Immigrant.

### Introduction

Kiran Desai Indian born American author is the daughter of famous writer Anita Desai. Like her mother, she is also an adopter of literary traits. She has been called one of the most brilliant creative writers of Modern India. She has been shortlisted for the Booker prize three times. Her books include *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). She won the Booker prize award for this novel. She shows Indian background in this novel. Apart from Diaspora, she explores other elements like Marginalisation nostalgia, quest or identity, and alienation, etc. The characters of her novels are Indian immigrants who settle in another country and leave their hometown. It has mainly focused on the USA because she left her country and settled in the U.S.A. Despite living in the USA, she is always nostalgic about her hometown. She pays regular visits to India and makes connections with her family. Like the protagonist of her work.

The word 'Diaspora' has its origin in the Greek word 'Diasperio', meaning to scatter. It is taken similarly to immigrants and exile. It was associated with Jewish historical experience but in today's world, its meaning is expanded. It means when people move from their homeland and start living in colonized countries. They migrate voluntarily or involuntarily but they leave their home for some reason like for a good life, for business. But they didn't forget their homeland, and country. They feel nostalgic about their homeland Kiran Desai says in the book *Transcultural Encounters in South-Asian American Woman's Fiction*. 'I see everything through the lens of being Indian. It is not something that has gone away, It is something that has become stronger as I've got older. We know that when people are moving to new places they face some difficulties and problems in the new land. Every person has a

different nature. Some people adjust themselves very quickly and become very happy. Others are unhappy due to their behaviour.

"All diasporas are unhappy. But every diaspora is unhappy in its way. Diaspora refers to the people who do not feel comfortable with their non- hyphenated identities as indicated on their passport... They are precariously lodged with an episteme of real or imagined displacements, self- imposed sense of exile, they are haunted by spectres... (Mishra 1)

### Objectives

- To know the relationship between the old and new diaspora.
- To analyse the similarities and differences between Indian and western diaspora.

### Research Methodology

- *The literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the diasporic imaginary* by Vijay Mishra, his work is possibly the best work on Indian diaspora. In this book, he distinguishes between the old and new diaspora. He also gives the name of those writers who lived abroad but they didn't forget their motherland and wrote about their love in the form of writings such as, V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Shanti Motoo, Bharati Mukherjee and Hanif Kureishi, etc. Apart from this, it throws light on nostalgia, displacement, cultural problems, etc.
- *Diaspora and Identity in South African fiction* by J.U. Jacobs examines diasporic identities in South African fiction, in which he states that diaspora is an ongoing process of displacement, migration and relocation by which diasporic identities are created. He also talks about cultural identity, cultural hybridity.
- *Transcultural encounters in South-Asian American women's fiction. Anita Desai, Kiran Desai and Jhumpa Lahiri* by Adriana Elena Stocian, It is a wonderful book in which a lot of aspects are explored through a myriad of examples. In this book, experiences of the above mentioned writers are shared through words.
- *Diaspora: A very short Introduction* by Kevin Kenny, he beautifully explained terms like diaspora, migration, etc. He describes the history of diaspora, definitions, talks about refugees and repeat migrants, contemporary migration and along with this, he talks about the future of diaspora and what would be its future.

### Data Collection

The data collection is based on reading books on diaspora. Primary source of research paper is 'The Inheritance of Loss' by Kiran Desai and secondary sources, magazines, journals, articles, newspaper, etc.

### Diasporic Literature

Diasporic literature associated with alienation, nostalgia and search for identity. It also deals with the dismantling of cultures. Many writers associated with diasporic literature like Salman Rushdie, Kiran Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Bharati Mukherjee etc. These writers are popular in Western culture. Salman Rushdie in his work presents that when we are living as a migrant it may evoke a sense of loss but on the other hand it has a positive side because we get an opportunity to gain new knowledge. He thinks that it may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to



reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge- which gives rise to profound uncertainties- that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indians of the mind. Roy Sommer defines the term 'diaspora' - Traditionally 'diaspora' refers to the dispersion of the Jews among the gentiles and their belief in an eventual return to the (lost) homeland. In current (multi)cultural theory, the term has been applied to all expatriate groups who chose, or were forced, to leave their native countries for a variety of reasons including indentured labour and the slave trade. In their new countries, these diasporic subjects form ethnic or cultural minorities while still retaining strong affiliations with their and more often, their ancestors'- homelands (Jacob, 6).

Kiran Desai presents these concepts in her work. She says that I am a member of Indian diaspora in the United States, She considers that her fiction disseminates ideals of fluid identity and location that enables multiple definitions of belonging:

"I don't care about passports. Literature is located beyond flags and anthems, simple ideas of loyalty. The vocabulary of immigration, of exile, of translation, inevitably overlaps with a realization of the multiple options for reinvention, of myriad perspectives, shifting truths, telling of lies- the great big warblings of it all. In a world obsessed with national boundaries and belonging, as a novelist working with a form also traditionally obsessed with place, it was a journey to come to this thought, that the less structured, the multiple, maybe a possible location for fiction, perhaps a more valid ethical location in general.

'In' *The Inheritance of Loss* she portrays those characters who are displaced. When they are living outside from their hometown they face an identity crisis. They are always trying to overcome this feeling. Kiran Desai confesses that her personal history of dislocation is reflected in *The Inheritance of Loss* where the idea of mobility becomes important because of early years of life in Delhi, Pune and Mumbai. She left India when her family moved to England at the age of eighteen for one year, and then moved to the U.S.A. She says;

"The characters of my story are entirely fictional, but these journeys, as well as my own, provided insight into what it means to travel between East and West and it is this I wanted to capture [...] Ever since I left India to lead this life of going back and forth, certain patterns have revealed themselves, emotional as well as historical. I began to consider the complexity of growing up in India, the changing world of my parents and grandparents, the subsequent direction of my life that is a continuation of those days and the upheavals of the time. The inheritance of loss begins in the north eastern Himalayas in Kalimpong Sai, seventeen-year-old life with his maternal grandfather, the judge, his dog Mutt and the cook. Her daughter is Cambridge educated. Sai loves Gyan who is his tutor. She is afraid that today he is not coming to teach her. Where they lived, that place's name is Cho Oyu. "Sai was seventeen, and her romance with Gyan the mathematics tutor was not even a year old." (Desai 8) Sai also feels the isolation in her life. Sai's mother feels lonely until Sai's father



proposes to her for marriage. When he proposed she immediately accepted his love because she felt sadness in her life. Desai says:

*This romance had allowed her to escape the sadness of her past and the tediousness of her current girlish life. Therefore is a time when everyone wishes to be an adult. ...Still, they consider themselves lucky to have found each other, each one empty with the same loneliness, each one fascinating, as a foreigner to the other...*

After marriage, her father went to Russia, with his family and left Delhi. After sometime Sai went to Dehradun for study and her parents died in Moscow and she was orphaned. There are three stories in this novel that deal with three worlds- Europe where Jemubhi Patel goes to study, American where Biju goes for earning a livelihood and Sai's life in Kalimpong. Biju was an illegal immigrant in New York who was sent there by his father.

*He was a powerless man, barely enough learning to read and write had worked like a donkey all his life, hoped only to avoid trouble, lived on only to see his son, (Desai 11)*

The cook thinks that his son is in a higher position as compared to him. "The cook had thought of ham rolls ejected from a can and fried in thick ruddy slices and was sure that his son was cooking English food, he had a higher position than if he were cooking Indian". (Desai, 17).

When Biju arrived in New York his life faced many difficulties. The land was new for him and he moved from one place to another for a good job. He enters the alienated world as a migrant, as an exile. He wants to settle there. He wrote his first letter to his father and fools were very happy.

"Respected Pita Ji, no need to worry everything is fine. The manager has offered me a full-time waiter position. Uniforms and food will be given to them. Angrezi khana only. No Indian food, the owner is not from India, He is from America itself." (Desai, 15).

When he was living there he thought that he was an unexpected individual on foreign land. Desai says nationality confirmed its stereotype (23). She says America is a third world country where people from all over the world belong. It is a global village. People go there to live a new life. They want to settle there. The new world is not always trustful. Biju's father warned him "Beware; the cook wrote to his son. "Beware Beware. Keep away. Distrust" (22) Biju finds himself in a difficult situation by adjusting to him there. He was less educated and born in a poor family. His father sent him to America for a new life but when he went there he felt insecure for his future. First, he joins a restaurant called Baby Bistro and second stars and stripes Diner. "All American flags on top, all Guatemalan flags below plus one Indian flag when Biju arrived. (21)

After sometime when he left a job and joined another job, he became restless. He becomes nostalgic about his village. Sometimes when he feels sad and becomes bored from his work. He crossed to the river.

"After work, he crossed the river,... Where after a single night at the synagogue long-skirted and sleeved girls walked in the old-fashioned manner with old fashioned men wearing black suits and hats as if they had to keep their past with them at all times so as not to lose





it.... He walked to the far end where the homeless man often sleeps in a dense chamber of green... Now and then Biju saw it scratching in a homey manner in the dirt and felt a bang for village life”. (81)

Saeed, a friend of Biju, applied for the immigrants, except Indians because they are not allowed to apply. Biju is not allowed to apply. Biju feels anger at his father for sundry him alone to this country, but he knew he wouldn't have forgiven his father for not trying to send him, either (82). Another character who has the same feeling and dilemma as Biju is saeed. He is very kind and helpful to everyone. He is not a paki, though he is a Muslim and a negro. He tells Biju that Indians are disliked everywhere because they are so ubiquitous but he still likes Biju. They have fun while working in the New York Bakery. Saeed always applies to the immigration lottery.

“Saeed applied for the immigration lottery each year... but no, no Indians. There were just too many jostling to get out, to pull everyone else down. The line would be stopped up for years, the quota was full, overfull, spilling over”. (81) Saeed quickly finds another job at the Banana Republic. Again he becomes friendless and he thinks about his village on the banks of Jamuna, where he had lived with his grandmother. His father sent money every month to him. All this disappeared when he went to Cho Oyu in Kalimpong. In ‘The location of culture’ Homi Bhaba talked about the effects of immigration.

“The experience of migrating to a new land involves ‘gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines, gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds, lived retroactively: gathering the past in a ritual of revival, gathering the present. According to Brah “Diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation and this is certainly a very important aspect of migratory experience. But diaspora is also potentially the site of hope and new beginnings. They are contested cultural and political terrains where individuals and collective memories collide, reasonable and reconfigure- Brah, 190.

The judge has a feeling of separation and isolation. The sense of displacement is caused by loss of cultural connections with the place. This problem is in court. He left his home first at the age of twenty in 1939 from his ancestral home to Bombay and then went to Liverpool before he joined Cambridge. In Cambridge, England he faces some difficulties. He confronts racism. From the start of his journey, he saw a difference between Indian England. On his way to Cambridge, found himself shocked as they progressed through fields by the enormous difference between the (boxy) English and the (loopy) Indian cow. (38)

Despite the judge, his wife Nimi also felt isolated. Because when jemubhai arrived on his first posting. He rented a Bungalow and Nimi event there with him but he didn't accompany her husband on the tour as the wives of others because “Nimi” learned no English and it was out of stubbornness, the judge thought. (170) She was desolated and she had fallen out of life altogether weeks went by and she spoke to nobody.... The day before Jemubhais arrival when suddenly it was brought to lustre again. (172)”. But Jemubhai started neglecting after he found that she squared in the toilet. Lonely and desolate Nimi was bitter and their married life was a living hell.



Another character's father Booty is a swiss priest who runs a dairy farm. He is actually in India illegally. He is told he must leave the country immediately because he becomes a victim of the Gorkha National Liberation Front. It is a campaign to create a separate state if India in the Gorkhaland region of west Bengal father Booty regretted the fact that he had not applied for an Indian passport all these years. He becomes nostalgic and thinks about his homeland, Switzerland. During this movement, Sai's lover gyan became a part of this movement and her cheated sai. Sai becomes angry when she finds out about it. Sai reached Gyan's house where they had an argument with each other and Gyan rejected Sai. After reaching home she asked herself to look into the mirror' "what will happen for me. (265)

Gyan would find adulthood and purity in a quest for a homeland and she would be left forever adolescent...265. Due to movement, the situation becomes worse in the hills. Biju tries to telephones his father but the lines are dead. Biju had a wish to come back to his home. He remembers his games as a boy with his friends in his village. He smiles at the memory of watching a cricket match on a car battery. He leaves America. "Biju stepped out of the airport into the Calcutta night, warm, mammalian. His feet sank into dust winnowed to softness at his feet, and he felt an unbearable feeling, sad and tender, old and sweet like the memory of falling asleep, a baby on his mother's lap (300)

Thus, people of diasporic experiences always have to face an identity crisis. Many people like Biju and sai feels adjustment problems when they go to a new land Diasporic people face alien lands and cherish fond memories of their homelands and they are lost in notary, Brah says, the concept of Diaspora refers to multilocationality within and across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries." (194)

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## Maldevelopment of Survival Disquietude Sensibilities in Anita Desai's *The Village By The Sea*

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### Abstract

*Anita Desai is a versatile novelist and also one of the most distinguished Indo-English writers of the post-colonial era. Desai focuses on several other debatable issues pertaining to contemporary Indian society through her novel, The Village by the Sea. The Village by the Sea was published in 1982 and was awarded Guardian Children's Fiction Prize in the year 1983. The maldevelopment of survival disquietude sensibilities is the supreme phase of the thematic concerns in The Village by the Sea in which maldevelopment of survival disquietude sensibilities set in a small fishing village Thul near Mumbai. Lila struggles to keep her family at aged 13 with her own younger brother Hari as well as two young sisters, disappearing when their mother is ill and their father is usually the worse for a drink. Here, Desai, focus mainly on the societal dynamics in which the children live with the pastoral life and the lower classes of the public. Hence, Desai criticizes society for not taking better care of those who are unable to care for themselves. Here we can also experience the crash of the modern technological development on a customary community of fishermen and farmers at the village.*

**Keywords:** Survival disquietude, Pessimism, Maldevelopment, Alienation.

Indian Regional Literature is fiction and poetry that deals on the dialect, characters, customs, history, topography and other features particular to a specific Indian region. The setting is particularly important in it. Anita Desai's novels can be described as Indian regional because of the way she makes use of these elements in relation to a part of the north of India. She is a very popular Indian novelist and creative writer of the modern life in all its complicated aspects. She was born in 1937 and now lives in Bombay. Her novels are now winning her wider recognition as a writer with an original voice, a remarkable subtle voice which conveys atmosphere and character in vivid and striking terms. Her main concerns were the contemporary issues i.e. just after independence.

Desai's novels are seen with the lives of frustration, loneliness and alienation. She mostly talks of poor and middle class. She presents her character as sensitive, individual and spiritually destroyed. She is concerned with the dark inner world. D.S. Maini said; "a disturbing and demanding presence in Indo-Anglican fiction." Her novels are generally based on love, marriage and sex, but *The Village by the Sea* is a different novel based on the thesis of survival disquietude, continued existence and endurance. There is a question mark on



India becoming independent country. Was this the dream of Indian becoming India a free country? One needs to think over with the novels of Anita Desai. What is the actual condition of Indian Village and its people, what is to be done and many more things? According to Anita Desai; “all my writings is an effort to discover and then to underline and finally to convey the true significance of things.”

The novel, *The Village by the Sea* is a survival of maldevelopment. It is the world in which Anita Desai brings the real society living and talking about the rustic society based on realism. For *The Village by the Sea*, she won the British Guardian’s fiction award. Anita Desai has tried to bring the real picture of real Indian village. She talks about the downtrodden people who were deprived of basic and fundamental rights i.e. education, cloth, food etc. The novel shows how the children of poor family get mature before their age. They come to think about their responsibility. The responsibility which was in fact to be carried over by the parents is left for the children. It is shifted on the weak shoulder of the poor children. How the eldest child of the family take the place of parents in the age of play wood and carefree life. The novel has a very common scene of a drunkard father, wailing, bed-ridden mother children left alone to find their livelihood.

The novel opens with a very beautiful scene and landscape, where the day starts with the most common practice of an Indian family, prayer. Again we find the ancient tradition of worshipping nature, the sacred rock to which Lila and other village women put flowers and kumkum. The worship of the rising sun is seen practised which is still a common practice in real life. The work of worship are performed by the elderly lady of the house but its different for Lila, as her mother is not well, even cannot come out of the bed so the job was to be performed by Lila instead of her mother. Lila was the elder child of the house and had to take the responsibility of the house. Desai have been created the hearts touching scenes in which to understand and bring the realism.

Anita Desai as a participant observer lived sometime in Thul which is village nearby Mumbai. The survival is such an important thing in everyone’s life. So Anita Desai has done in her novel *The Village by the Sea*. *The Village by the Sea* is about Lila’s family. It is based on the poverty, hardships and sorrow faced by a small rural, community in India. Lila and Hari were sister and brother respectively. Lila is main and most appealing character in the novel. They have to look out their ill mother and drunken father and two younger sisters permanently. When Hari runs away to Bombay in desperation, Lila was left by herself to safeguard her family. In her family she is the eldest daughter and conscientious for the whole thing in the family. Though she is thirteen years old, Lila is soft and caring to her sisters Bela and Kamal, ill mother and drunken father.

Lila’s young life did not develop in the “normal way in the existence problems of survival in her village ‘Thul’- located on the Western coast of India. She grows up really quickly and we can see the difference between how Lila thinks and how another girl who is her age thinks when Lila accompanies her friends while she goes shopping in the village. Lila’s maldevelopment of survival disquietude sensibilities is about being isolated from other families, Mother’s disease and her disappeared brother’s life.



### 1) Alienation

Lila's family is financially hard pressed and materially alienated. Lila's house in the Thul Village serves as a symbol of alienation and maldovelopment of survival disquietude. It has been well expressed by Anita Desai in the novel as

'The hut should have been re-thatched years ago- the old palm leaves were dry and tattered and slipping off the beams. The earthen walls were crumbling. The windows gaped, without any shutters. There was no smoke to be seen curling up from under a cooking pot on a fire as in other huts in the surrounding groves of coconut and banana.' (P.5)

Her neighbour house was also at some distance. When her mother was sick, she sent her sisters to their neighbour's house to call Hira-bai, So that she'll arrange for a doctor. So, every night, she was in fear till her brother or father came home. Afterwards Lila got used to it and became bold to live alone with her sisters when her brother was in Bombay and her father and mother were in the hospital.

### 2) Disquietude about Mother's Disease

Lila's mother suffered fever frequently so needed help and no sense in her mother's body sometimes. Following quotes reveals the survival disquietude and fear that Lila undergoes.

She has fever today', Lila murmured. 'High fever. Go tell – go and tell. (P.69).

She spoke in a trembling voice that she tried to control... Go and ask Hira-bai to come. Or to send a doctor. (P.70)

Lila gets nervous and dreadful when her mother gets sick. This made her ask for help from De silvas to admit her mother in the hospital. They admitted and gave money for treatment. At last her mother gets cured from anaemia.

### 3) Disappeared Brother's Life

Hari went to Bombay unannounced to his parents and sisters. Lila and her sisters were waiting for him whole night. Her mother once again 'burning with fever' (P.128) called her sisters and said "Go to the bazaar and get some ice for ma. See if Hari is there. Call him, he may have stayed in the village at night to see the drama in the temple. Tell him to come home and bring some ice'. (P.128)

Lila's friend Mina told her sisters that their brother Hari went to Bombay along with other men to give a petition to the government. 'Lila frowned as if she could not understand. Could hari have been so angry and so upset as to leave home and run away? ...She would never have run away herself... It was all very frightening and difficult but she was here, her sisters and her mother were in her care, and somehow she would have to manage.' (P.129).

During monsoon, when the storm struck their village, they were worrying and frightened about Hari's life in Bombay. Lila's sisters asked her 'why did Hari not come? He had sent them a post card to say he was in Bombay, safe, but why did he not return? They say in silence, listening to the frogs clamouring in the dark'. (P. 204) Lila answered them that 'He can't come now- the ferry will have stopped for the monsoon,'... trying to sound sensible and brisk. 'Perhaps he will come when the monsoon is over. Perhaps he will come at Diwali'. (P.

204) Though Lila too had the same doubt, why he didn't return, she hidden her fear and consoled her sisters.

Anita Desai has explicitly described in her writing, and she shows how Hari in the dilapidated conditions of the Sri Krishna Eating House finds warmth and affection through Mr. Panwallah-owner and watch mender of the Ding-Dong watch shop. When Hari is terribly home sick, Mr. Panwallah makes confidence and comforts in him. Even Mr. Panwallah gives Hari a bright and inspirational future and teaches watch mending to him. This shows that even in one of the busiest, insecure and rickety cities such as Mumbai there is still hope, love and affection. With the help of Mr. Panwallah and Jagu, Hari wants back to Thul and insisting to buy the bus ticket. Jagu's magnanimity which reflects in by giving some extra money to be brings back to Hari's family. Hari's realization that he can turn his watch skills into a business, and the resolution is the family coming together to start that business.

Lila's maldevelopment of survival disquietude about her being alone from other families, mother's disease, disappearance of brother and all made her determine, to maintain patience, suffer a lot and work hard to uplift the family. Hence, Lila's disquietude implicates the development in Lila's character and such development reflects in the family surviving against all odds.

### **Hope Change and Development**

Life is a process where people have to move from one stage to another if they want to improve their lives. When Hari comes to know about the factory coming up in the village a hope arise in him. He thinks of getting a job in the factory which will help him to run the house effectively. Next, Hari decides to move from Thul to Bombay. In *The Village by the Sea*, by Anita Desai "Where there is life there is hope" this very statement has been reflected and also reflected the aware with the modern society and development. She knew the importance of science and scientific development in the life of modern India. It was infact the need of modern independent India, as employment was a big issue. Therefore Anita Desai refers to the word 'Factory' as synonym to employment. She has tried to pay emphasis to the significance of skill development. We find Hari and other boys talking about factory, skill and employment. Hari says that only a high technical degree can fetch employment whereas the other boys say the training it in the factory can help to fetch employment.

The large uneducated population of India suffering from unemployment can be helped out with the skill development programmes. This can help India to get rid of unemployment among its people. This infact will benefit the larger section of the society. The development can only come with change and every family unit struggling for survival disquietude wants change and development as seen in the case of Hari. Hari thinks of going to Bombay for job, and on the extra side he also thinks of getting job on Bijju's boat which is to come with modern engines and technology. India is a land of agriculture and this has also been reflected by Desai's novel *The Village by the Sea*, as a result of showing it as a main source of survival. It also has a message that to bring development in the fields of agriculture, modern technology is very essential it has to be added in the fields of agriculture. The



emphasis of contemporary technology can also be seen in the reference of Biju's new boat with deep freeze.

The three magical words equality, fraternity and liberty was the dream of independent India. The feeling of liberation can too be seen in this novel *The Village by the Sea* when Hari frequently thinks of moving away from his family and he seems to be a frustrated character who wants to get rid of drunkard father. This can well be seen in the statement of Hari; "Maybe a poisonous snake will bite him. He may step on one and be bitten, there are so many of them and it is dark. Then he would die." He did not say that in fear, he said it with hope, as if he wished that was what would happen.

### **Class Difference and Lost Identity**

Desai portrays industrialization of the remote village of Thul as a threat to the traditional way of life of inhabitants, both men and women. The villagers who live by the ocean and some agricultural land are gradually deprived of both sources of food. First, big boats leave no fish to be caught with nets on the banks, and later the chemicals from the factory poison all the fish, and the agricultural land was forcibly taken for the fertilizer factory. Anita Desai describes to the word 'Factory' as synonym to employment. Villagers cannot even find work in the factory since they are not trained to work with machines. This development in the type of factory is clearly would call 'maldevelopment'. However, Desai does not portray only women as victims of 'maldevelopment'. All the villagers including men, women and children who did have some occupation before the encroachment of industrialization in the form of the factory are now the victims since none of them is considered suitable to effort in the fertilizer factory.

Desai is acutely aware of this rural-urban divide besides her insight on the hierarchical power structures within each community. Desai's work not only highlights dualisms like man / woman, rich / poor, urban / rural, culture / nature etc. where the former denies the dependence on the latter, it also shows how the internal hierarchical structures are developed as strategies to cope with the economic crises resulting from 'maldevelopment'.

Anita Desai clearly depicts that villagers' concern for the depletion of fish in the sea and the fertilizer factory as a risk to the traditional way of life is supported on their material conditions. Villagers living close to nature are also dependent on nature for the similar reason. In the sake of the residents of Thul, they are all fishers and agriculturalists. The sea not only grants them food but also provides a source of income for the fish they catch is sold inside Thul and moreover exported to the huge cities. Their land produces rice and coconuts not only for them to eat but also to be sold in the huge market. Villagers, for this reason have a well-built attachment with the sea and the land. Public in the big cities too are dependent on nature for food since all the seafood and the crops they consume are received from nature but the difference of both the pastoral and town people is so as to of their attitude toward nature.

### **Sense of Responsibility**

The survival is such an important thing in the life of human being. So Anita Desai has done in her novel *The Village by the Sea*. It the important factor in this novel. Hari has taken place of his father. It is a common practice in Indian family where the eldest boy is replaced



by the father. Hari acts as guardian of the family. He is aware of his responsibility towards his mother and sisters. He adds in a serious way saying;

“Go on go on you are late. Hari shouted raising his switch.”

And even the younger children in the family consider the elder brother next or equal to father. They think it is right to make demand and ask to full their needs; it is also the work of the elder brother to fulfil the needs of younger. As seen in the words of Lila’s sisters; “Hari bhai buy us some sweets”. Hari as a responsible guardian was worried about his sisters’ marriage. He thought about dress, jewellery etc. Things required for the marriage. Thinking about all these and worries led him to move to Mumbai to earn money. As Hari thought;

He would have to find them husbands, and buy them their wedding finery- silk sarees and gold jewellery- and arrange their wedding to which the whole village would have to invite. The bridegroom’s might demand a dowry- a bicycle or even a scooter. Gold buttons, coins and jewellery. A cow or a buffalo. A piece of land.

### Humanism

Humanism is an important factor in Desai’s *The Village by the Sea*. Human stands for human. The De Silvas come forward for Lila’s help. The De Silvas begin helping the family financially. Seeing Lila alone they help to take her mother to hospital for better treatment. They even help her father to get free of drinking. In the general public humanism has an significant role to play and that is reflected in the novel. The society can keep a balance only if they the rich and the poor stand for each other. As, seen in the novel ‘village by the sea’ where the De Silvas and Lila’s family stand for each other at the time when Lila’s mother was ill and there was no help for them.

Exploded de silvas; “of course we will pay for the medicine. Go and fetch your mother.”

Further; “wait here- I’ll go and fetch a stretcher and a nurse and go and talk to a doctor..... and take you home.

### Wealth and Happiness

The significance of wealth has been clearly replicated in the novel *The Village by the Sea* by Anita Desai. Wealth is important for survival, poverty leaves to distress. Hari could easily understand that he has to do some work and earn money for the better living of his family. It was due to debt that the dog Pinto was poisoned by the men from whom Hari’s father had borrowed money. Hari knew that he had to go away from Thul to earn wealth otherwise he would never get a chance to help his family out of poverty and out of debts made by his father. Wealth can bring happiness, as seen in *The Village by the Sea*. De Silvas, the rich people who come to Thul for summer vacation help Leela to take her mother to hospital. He pays money to Leela and her sisters for their work they do for De Silvas. De Silvas were in fact an employment for Leela and her sister in the absence of their brother Hari.

### Women Independence

Leela in the novel *The Village by the Sea* is a symbol of pride for women. Leela, being a teenage girl of dares to get the responsibility of her mother where her age was to hang



out with friends and think of other things as teenage girls often do. Sign of distress was never seen on her face, infact she becomes more independent when Hari leaves the house secretly. She realises the need and acts according to the circumstances. She starts working for De Silvas to support the family, asks for help from De Silvas and saves her mother. Leela is a girl with practical understanding. Though she was not educated but she acts sensibly according to situation. She is a symbol of faith. As seen when her mother is ill and Lila requests De Silvas for help;

Lila looked at her with gratitude and explained.... there is a hospital in Alibagh. I thought – I thought if you can take her there- and I'll work for you- then the money you pay me-uh- that can pay for the doctor and the medicine.

Desai is tremendous author who portray the apparent image of female in a modern issue with their deep intense emotion. Desai's sensitive portrayal of the inside feelings of her female characters is brilliant. In organize to shatter this human/other dualism, it is significant to consider all forms of oppression as connected and the liberation of one or the other unaccompanied is not the solution of the problem.

In *The Village by the Sea*, family plays a vital role in the enlargement and progress of individual and broken homes definitely has its worse effect on an individual. Apart from being living legend of Indian English novelists, Anita Desai is not simply the viewer of the pathetic conditions of Indian woman but originated and emerged through the pathos, ethos of Indian social life and was nourished by Indian culture and have shared pains and agony of Indian woman and have consoled her and have encouraged her to struggle to re-establish her self-seeking identity. The whole body of work deserves a fresh interpretation in terms of the concept of maldevelopment of survival disquietude sensibilities.

Desai is in accurate sense the representative of India and Indian Writing in English. In her novels she writes about India, Indian people and Indian problems in the social order. She uses the theme related to day to day life. Her novels are close to Indian heart and soul of the public, language is simple well readable to ordinary ones. Hari can save some money from restaurant while he learns how to repair watches on the side. When Hari returns from the city he and his family plans to begin a business with his new skills. It is a positive ending with life looking more positive, and all because of Lila's and Hari's ingenuity and courage. The story ends on an optimistic note reflected by the hope and aspirations of the protagonists soaring high.

Anita Desai portraits the society's orthodox beliefs which is typical of Indian living also. Though the plot does not seem to be unusual, it attracts the readers by its vivid description of the characters and beauty of the nature. But it can be said that the addition of the regional languages would have added to its aesthetic sense. Desai efficiently expresses the protagonists Lila and Hari facing and defeating change in a customary culture through the practices they surpass. Thus, Desai's novel *The Village by the Sea* is an inspirational story of pretty safe to say that this is a young adult novel of value. Thus, we can handle on the significance of maldevelopment of survival disquietude sensibilities here.



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## Cultural Hybridity in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Unaccustomed Earth*

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### Abstract

*“Unaccustomed Earth” is short story collection deals with the lives of immigrants by Jhumpa Lahiri. Immigrants are the ones who have taken residence in any other country of the world other than their native. These immigrants find it difficult to mingle with the host country and its culture. Many of them often face the challenges of exile, loneliness, constant search for identity and cultural dilemmas. The first-generation immigrants undergo all those issues and long to return to their homeland. Whereas, second-generation immigrants feel alienated from their own parents (first-generation immigrants) due to their upbringing in the host country. The second-generation immigrants being able to follow the behavioural pattern of the host country develops a hybrid cultural identity by assimilating to the host culture. This paper focuses on the hybrid cultural identity of the second-generation immigrants in Jhumpa Lahiri's “Unaccustomed Earth”.*

**Keywords:** Immigrants, Assimilation, Culture, Hybridity.

Hybridity is a term coined by Homi K. Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture*. Hybridity is all about mixer of two different things or notions which leads to the emergence of new one. In his work, *The Location of Culture* Homi K Bhabha says that hybridity is all about the in-betweenness of the other. People of once colonised countries become hybrids which is an outcome of their colonial experience. On the other hand, People who migrate from one country to another also experience such kind hybridization. Immigrant experience is not only about the loss of homeland, alienation and exile but also describes the cultural assimilation of the immigrants for better survival in the host country. Thus diaspora studies “began with the sense of cultural segregation, has matured to a phase of acculturation under the impact of globalization and glocalization” (Mukerjee 15). The concept of amalgamation leads to the in-betweenness or other of the immigrants. It paves the way for the emergence of ‘Third Space’. Homi K Bhabha on “The Third Space” writes that:

Al forms of culture are constantly in a process of hybridity. But for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom... the process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something



different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation (qtd. in Mukerjee 16).

Immigrants leave their native country and moves to another country for various reasons. These immigrants often find themselves in exile, alienated in the host country struggling to adopt the culture of the host country. Some of those immigrants' especially first generation immigrants aspiring to have a better and peaceful life try to adopt the host culture. But they are not able to come out from the cultural roots of the home country. It makes them hybrid being as they could not able to develop an identity in the host country and could not keep their native identity. Unlike the first generation immigrants, their off springs second-generation immigrants are able to build an identity in the host country. They often met with struggles as they torn between the duties and self. Though they are able to create an identity of their own in the host country due to the influence of their parents it becomes hard for them to create an entirely new identity of their one.

In earlier days, people forced to move away from their country to another as slaves without their will. And so, they struggled to settle themselves in the host country. Later people moved from their own country to another for better prospective life. The first generation of immigrants finds themselves not able to mingle with the host culture and had a strong sense of belongingness towards home country. Whereas, the second-generation immigrants wanted to create an identity of their own in the host country through empowerment. They desire to construct an identity by making themselves an empowered being in the host country. Mainly these immigrants try to cope up with the host culture in order to escape marginalization.

Jhumpa Lahiri herself being an immigrant elegantly presents the life of immigrants in all her works. Lahiri is a child of three continent developed complex cultural identity. Lahiri was aware about the critics describing herself and her works. She also wrote about this in an essay:

Take, for instance, the various ways I am described: as an American author, as a British-born author, as an Anglo-Indian author, as an NRI (non-resident Indian) author, as an ABCD lost and found author (ABCD stands for American born confused "desi"- and is an acronym coined by Indian nationals to describe culturally challenged second-generation Indians raised in the US). According to Indian academics, I've written something known as "Diaspora fiction"; in the US, it's "immigrant fiction". (qtd. in Fine 212).

This complex cultural identity can be evidently seen in all the characters of Lahiri. All the works of Lahiri not only brings out the loss of roots but also the assimilation of the immigrants to the host culture. These immigrants adopt the cultural ideas of host culture by empowering them. In *Unaccustomed Earth*, all the characters of Lahiri are empowered in the alien land. *Unaccustomed Earth* is a collection of eight short stories with five independent and three interconnected stories.

All the second-generation immigrants developed hyphenated identity in their process of assimilation to the host culture by empowering them. The process of assimilation begins

from their earlier childhood itself. Many of the second-generation immigrants forgot or gave up their mother tongue which is Bengali. Some of those second-generation immigrants voluntarily gave up their mother tongue and some of those due to their prolonged stay and education in the host country made them eventually slip their language. Accepting the language of the host country can be considered as an important aspect in the process of hybridization. Peter Burke call this acceptance as linguistic hybridity or mixing of the tongues. Thus Linguistic hybridity of all the second-generation immigrants is shown in all the characters of Lahiri.

Many of the second-generation immigrants felt no connection with the country of origin or homeland and so giving up the language is easier for them. This very fact is evidently seen in the story “Unaccustomed Earth”. Ruma, the protagonist of the story “Unaccustomed Earth” is unable to read the letter that her father wrote to Mrs. Baschi in Bengali. Usha in “Hell-Heaven” also forgot her Bengali and communicates in English with others. She says, “Deborah and I spoke freely in English, a language in which by that age, I expressed myself more easily than Bengali, which I was required to speak at home” (69). In “A Choice of Accommodations” Amit was appreciated by his friends for his good English.

Homi K Bhabha says “Cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in the relation of the self to other” (35). According to Stuart Hall, cultural identities are “never singular but multiply constructed across different- often interesting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions” (qtd. in. Singh and Singhvi 189). These immigrants try to set themselves in a space between the host country and their home country. This paves way for the emergence of Third Space coined by Homi K Bhabha. The concept of Third space can be found in the work of Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Unaccustomed Earth*.

Immigrants often develop hybrid identity as it is unavoidable in the era of globalization to avoid marginalization in the alien land. Peter Burke in his *Cultural Hybridity* said that “a process of hybridization that assists the economic globalization as well as being assisted by it” (2). The process to develop hybrid identity can be found in the social, economic and political spheres of immigrant lives in the alien land. But of culture it has to be brought under the sense of “attitudes, mentalities and values and their expression, embodiment or symbolization in artefacts, practices and representations” (Burke 7). It can be found in the first and second-generation immigrants of Lahiri in *Unaccustomed Earth*.

In *Unaccustomed Earth*, all the lead protagonists of Lahiri vividly presents the hybrid cultural identity through their way of life. The process of hybridization is also known as the loss of traditional roots and assimilation to the host culture. Unlike their immigrant parents who are first generation immigrants, the second-generation immigrants found it easier to assimilate to the host country. Second-generation immigrants consider the host country as their country of origin or homeland. According to them, the place of origin is their homeland and so assimilating to the host culture is much easier for them. Many of the second-generation protagonists of Lahiri are born and brought up in the host country i.e. the USA or England.



The Title story “Unaccustomed Earth” from the collection *Unaccustomed Earth* picturises the life of second-generation immigrant Ruma. Though she is a daughter of Indian immigrants, she always feels herself as an American and leads her life according to her wish. She takes various jobs in the summer despite her parents’ opposition which is not acceptable in the Indian culture and is part of the western culture. It is revealed by her father in the story, that: “Even in high school, in the summers, on working as a busgirl at a local restaurant, the sort of work their relatives in India would have found disgraceful for a girl of her class and education” (40). In Indian culture children are not allowed to work and make their pocket money, they are expected to depend on their parents. Ruma did not follow this culture and lived her life as she wants by doing various jobs and earns for her needs. When it comes to her marriage she decides to get married with Adam, an American. It is a shock to her parents who are not ready to accept the marriage. She knew that this would happen and so she never revealed about her previous relationships with the other American men to her parents. In the Indian culture the pre-marital relationships are not acceptable and this is another example of her hybrid identity.

Stuart Hall in his “Cultural identity and Diaspora” says, “Cultural identity, in the second sense, is a matter of “becoming” as well as of “being”” (Hall 5). This very fact is exemplified through the first and second-generation immigrants in the *Unaccustomed Earth*. In the first story, “Unaccustomed Earth” Ruma’s father is the first generation immigrant who tries to maintain a balance between the country of origin and the country of his residence. Ruma’s father worked in the pharmaceutical company and is retired after the death of his wife and “began travelling around Europe” (3). When he visits Ruma’s new bought house in Seattle to stay with her and her three-year-old son, Akash until his next tour to Prague. There Ruma finds the Americanization of her father and the relationship between a father and daughter gets better. It is understood by Ruma at the very sight of her father when he reaches her home in Seattle. “He was wearing a baseball cap that said POMPEII, brown cotton pants and a sky-blur polo shirt, and a pair of white leather sneakers. She was struck by the degree to which her father resembled an American in his old age. With his grey hair and fair skin he could have been practically from anywhere” (11). At his old age he finds himself comfortable with the alien culture.

Mrs. Bagchi is also a Bengali immigrant from India; she is a widower with just two years of married life. Mrs. Bagchi married a boy with whom she was in love with, but her husband died in a motorbike accident. She becomes a widow with just two years of married life. She ran away from home and came to USA as she fears that her parents would urge her to marry again. Mrs. Bagchi has become self-reliant with her “doctorate in statistics and taught since the seventies at Stony Brook University” (8). It was in their package tour Ruma’s father and Mrs. Bagchi met each other. “Being only two Bengalis in the tour group, naturally they’d struck up a conversation. They started eating together, sitting next to one another on the bus. Because of their common appearance and language, people mistook them for husband and wife” (9). It is the country of their origin and nostalgia that brought them closer to each other and they fall for each other. Though they love each other company, they are not



ready to get married especially, Mrs. Bagchi: “She is adamant about not marrying, about never sharing her home with another man, conditions which made the prospect of her companionship all the more appealing” (9). Mrs. Bagchi represents Indian culture when she decides to live with the memory of her husband and not get married again. But Mrs. Bagchi’s decision to share a room with Ruma’s father in Prague represents her amalgamation to the host culture. They do not want to marry and do not want to make their relationship public. Thus, Ruma’s father and Mrs. Bagchi are the perfect example of the ‘other’ and it reveals their contradictory nature and complex identity.

Homi K Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture* says, “...we find ourselves in the movement of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside inclusion and exclusion etc”(1). This is applicable to Ruma’s father in the story “Unaccustomed Earth”. Unlike Mrs Bagchi, Ruma’s father is not ready to assimilate himself to the host culture in his initial days. After the death of his wife he feels a vacuum in his life and feels that he leads his life not for himself but for others. Now he wanted to lead his life for himself and decides accept the American culture. Though he and Mrs. Bagchi assimilate themselves to the host culture, their respect for the country of their origin has not been changed.

Ruma is deeply affected by the death and memory of her mother, and so when she conceives again she decides to become a stay at home mother. In spite of her assimilated American identity, she wants to give her career and replace her mother’s role by taking care of her children. Ruma’s decision is not appreciated by her father and he keeps insisting Ruma to go to work. Ruma’s appearance and decision remind him of his early marriage says. Mukerjee opines that, “He feels that though his daughter is a creature of the American soil, yet, her identity has not been affected by the global coordination. Rather she is led by the internal indices of her will, which makes her stand on the same ground with her India-raised mother” (24). It shows Ruma’s inbetweenness or complex cultural identity.

Despite her upbringing in the host country, Ruma reflects the Indian culture. Ruma finds about her father’s relationship with other woman through the letter that her father written to Mrs. Bagchi. She couldn’t read the letter as it is written in Bengali but she assumes what it could be. “The woman in the video, the reason for his good spirits, the reason he did not want to live at Seattle. The reason he ‘d wanted a stamp that morning. Here, in a handful of sentences she could not even read, was the explanation, the evidence that it was not just with Akash her father had fallen in love” (58). Ruma attached the stamp on the letter and sends it to its destination. Thus her decision to send the letter shows that she accepted other woman in the life of her father, which shows her hyphenated identity.

Lahiri in “Hell-Heaven” also portrayed the life of Usha the protagonist of the story. Usha is a second-generation immigrant who find herself existed in the Third space and contented to live as ‘other’. This story portrayed the life of Usha as well as her mother Aparna, who finds it difficult to accept her “Americanization”. Aparna accompanied her husband to America, after they get married. Aparna couldn’t assimilate to the western culture unlike her husband, Shyamal Da. So, she spends her life in solitude and finds solace from her



daughter Usha. When she meets Pranab, a Bengali immigrant she becomes lively and happy. She falls in love with him, but Pranab married Deborah whom he met in the college. Aparna hated Deborah as she becomes jealous of her and she predicted that Deborah would divorce him. Though it becomes true it's not Deborah who broke their marriage but Pranab. This incident created an impact on Aparna and her view about the American culture. Growing old, Shayamal Da becomes fonder of his wife Aparna and she even goes to college to obtain a degree. Finally, Aparna learns to accommodate herself in the host country thereby accepting her life in the Third space.

Usha, daughter of Aparna being born in the host country she couldn't follow the culture of the roots of her origin. When her mother forced her to follow the dress code and food habit of India, she finds it difficult and starts to develop hatred for her mother. She has been very close to her mother since her birth, but as grows up she drifts apart from her leaving her mother Aparna alone. And so, Usha hides her American side to her mother like going to parties and her relationship with American boys. But when Aparna accepts the Americanization of her daughter, their relationship becomes straightened and their bond becomes closure. Thus, the second and first generation immigrants initially struggle to accept their identity but slowly begin to live in the Third Space.

Pranab Chakraborty is also a cultural hybrid in the story "Hell-Heaven". Pranab came to US for his studies and befriends Usha's mother Aparna whom he met at the park. He becomes close to Usha's family to get rid of homesickness. Initially, Pranab do not want to mingle with the American culture as he feels alienated and finds solace in the house of Aparna. Oneday, he announced everyone that he is going to marry Deborah an American much to the shock of the family. His decision to marry an American can be considered as his decision to accept the American culture. After twenty-three years of his married life, they got divorced. Pranab is the one who initiated divorce idea. In Indian tradition, marriage is sacred bond which is unbreakable. Thus, he becomes cultural hybrid by breaking the marriage with Deborah.

"A Choice of Accommodations" is the story of the protagonist, Amit Sarkar. Like all the other protagonists in the *Unaccustomed Earth*, Amit Sarkar is also the son of Bengali immigrant parents. But Amit is not forced to follow the culture by his parents and even they criticized their own country of origin. So he has no pressure to follow the Bengali culture and becomes the perfect example for amalgamation with hybrid identity.

When Amit's parents move to Delhi, he was put up in a boarding school at Longford. Among all the students at Longford Amit is the only Indian. The process of Americanization of Amit begins from his school life at Longford. Eventually, his married life to Megan, an American and becomes a father of two daughters. "A Choice of Accommodations" as the title suggests Amit made a choice of assimilating to the host culture to live in the 'present' and not of the 'past'. Thus Amit is the perfect example of Hybridity.

"Only Goodness" is the fourth story in the collection *Unaccustomed Earth*. In the story, Lahiri presents the inner psyche of immigrants' children who demand the liberal American upbringing from their parents. Sudha and Rahul is the protagonist of this story.



Sudha is an elder sister of Rahul who cares for her brothers' life. Sudha shines academically; goes to penn for graduation and later gets an M.A in International relations, followed by a Second M.A from the London School of Economics. According to Sudha, London is her home where she was born and has childhood memories and not India. It shows that the idea of homeland differs for the second-generation immigrants from their parents. According to them the place where they born is their homeland. Sudha marries Roger, an English man and leads a happy life with him. Sudha gives importance to her personal identity than her familial duties "[...] when the familial identity pose a potential threat to the self" (Fine 217).

The second part of the collection deals with the three interconnected stories, which tells the story of Hema and Kaushik. The first story tells about the Americanization Kaushik's parents and Kaushik's inability to accommodate himself in the alien land. But Hema's parents followed Indian culture while living in the foreign land. Hema admired Kaushik's parents and their lavish life style. She wanted her parents to mingle with the mainstream American culture. Throughout the story Hema compares the lives of two immigrant Indian-Bengali families in America.

The second story of the second part "Year's End" explains the life of Kaushik, who mourns over the death of his deceased mother. It describes the 'in-betweenness' of the second-generation immigrant, Kaushik. The story begins with the second marriage of Kaushik's father to a much younger widow Chitra. Despite his American way of living Kaushik finds it difficult to accommodate with the new found family, especially, Chitra who is a replacement for his dead mother. After fighting with his step-sister, he ran away from the house with all the pictures' of his mother. He buried the box which is filled with the pictures of his mother. "I was only had a stick and a sharp-edged rock to work with the hole was not impressive, but it was deep enough to conceal the box" (291). Kaushik's decision to bury the pictures of his mother shows his desire to move forward in his life by accepting his new founded family, which is an outcome of his hybridity. Thus, the second-generation immigrants of Lahiri struggle initially due to their emotional displacement. They were born and brought up in the alien land but were expected to follow the culture of homeland by their parents which leads to their emotional displacement. But at last they learn to balance their duties and self and learn to adjust in third space which makes them as hybrid beings.

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## The Lure of the Normal: Researching Depictions of Disability in Select Young Adult Graphic Narratives

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### Abstract

*The present paper intends to focus on the way disability is presented in graphic narratives read by young adults. It is an analysis and interrogation of the portrayals of disability in select graphic narratives like Marc Hempel's, Mike Carey's and Sonny Liew's Re-gifters (2007), Mike Carey's, Jim Fern's and Eric Nguyen's Crossing Midnight (Vol. 1) (2007), Cecil C. Castellucci's and Jim Rugg's The Plain Janes (2007), Keith Giffen's and John Rogers' Blue Beetle: Shell-Shocked (2007), Sara Varon's Robot Dreams (2007), Gary Whitta's and Ted Naifeh's Death, Jr. (2007) and Bob Kane's and Sam Keith's Batman: Secrets (2007). The study thereby effectively adds a grip and disability perspective to the field of Graphic Novels. The objectives of the research paper are framed with a view to find answers to and get clear cut notions regarding core issues like the nature, range and type of disabilities most often featured, whether one disability received more attention than others, detection of a systemic pattern, if any, that is followed in the treatment of disabilities; also looks at deviations from the hitherto followed pre-set, pre-determined models and conventions in the treatment of disability, whether the characters are defined by their disability, whether stereotypes are used in graphic novels to portray people with disabilities and finally whether the depictions of disability are problematic, faulty, misleading and misleading. This study also inevitably draws on the age-old specificity, oppressive power and contemporaneity of the concept of normalcy. It endeavours to deconstruct the very idea of normalcy. This sort of dissection denaturalizes all the hegemonic notions of normativity thus reframing ableism as a problem that concerns everyone. The current text also recommends the arena of an emerging discipline called Graphic Novels to be an integral part of curricula for nouveau reading exercises and exciting learning experiences.*

**Keywords:** Disability, Graphic narratives, Oppressive power, Ableism.

“We live in a world of norms. Each of us endeavours to be normal or else deliberately tries to avoid that state. We consider what the average person does, thinks, earns or consumes...There is probably no area of contemporary life in which some idea of a norm, mean, or average has not been calculated...To understand the disabled body, one must return to the concept of the norm, the normal body. So much of writing about disability has focused on the disabled person as the object of study... I would like to focus not so much on the



construction of disability as on the construction of normalcy. I do this because the “problem” is not the person with disabilities; the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to create the “problem” of the disabled person.” (Lennard J. Davis’ *The Disability Studies Reader*)

Literature very often motivates, inspires and enlightens us to scale great heights in life by exposing us to new realms of thoughts and ideas. It makes use of language in a malleable and impressionable way to fulfill the agenda of the text. All communication is not linguistic. *Pratyaksha* (‘that which is before one’s eyes’) or direct perception, in Indian philosophy, is one among the most valuable sources of knowledge. Perception is definite knowledge that arises from sense-object contact. ‘I know it when I see it,’ best exemplifies and substantiates this unit of knowledge called perception. The power of the visual can be found in the form of comics and graphic novels.

The graphic novel is one of the most exciting forms of storytelling, one of the most preferred formats for literature. It is a relatively new type of literature that emerged during the late 20th century. It quickly gained popularity among the readers. Its closest predecessor is the comic book, which also came into its own during the 20th century, and these media are still closely intertwined, so much so that the distinction between the two often becomes blurred. The graphic novel strikes us by its duality (text plus visuals); the pictorial presentation of stories is its striking aspect. Its combination of art and text offers endless possibilities for creative expression.

Owing to its unique combination of visual art and verbal text, the graphic novel often controls a reader’s expectations of a story in innovative ways. Elements such as panel size, page layout, art style, colour, physical format, et Cetera can be made use of to help shape the reader’s interaction with the story and emphasize certain concepts or themes. The graphic novel is a form that values experimentation with narrative structure and stylistic elements that shape the way audience reads the text.

One popular reading format for youth today is the graphic novel. Approximately, fifteen percent of the global population lives with some form of a disability. As young adults constitute an even larger population of individuals with disabilities and because of the interest by youth in this format, this study aims to look at the representation of disabilities found in current graphic novels. Many recent significant writings have emerged about graphic novels. Disability is ever present in this genre of literature. The hybridity of the visual and the textual allows the creators in portraying pain and other non visible illnesses in addition to ‘n’ number of other issues and thematic concerns better, since they do not rely solely on communication of those feelings via text. Much has been written about the role of literature for youth that includes people with disabilities. Hence the humble attempt is to bring together the vast expanse of disability literature and select graphic narratives read by young adults.

The current study entitled, “The Lure of the Normal: Researching Depictions of Disability in Select Young Adult Graphic Narratives,” aims to have a detailed and in-depth look at the varied versions, differential treatments and broad spectrum of representations of disability in the amazing range of select young adult graphic narratives by unearthing the aura

that is often associated with the basic, fundamental and root cause, contained and embedded, in the so-called enigmatic term ‘normalcy.’ The presence of disability in young adult graphic narratives is a relatively new area of research in the field of literary disability studies.

This paper analyzes representations of disability experience in the visual form of a few graphic novels read by young adults. It is an analysis and interrogation of the portrayals of disability in select graphic narratives like Marc Hempel’s, Mike Carey’s and Sonny Liew’s *Re-gifters* (2007), Mike Carey’s, Jim Fern’s and Eric Nguyen’s *Crossing Midnight* (Vol. 1) (2007), Cecil C. Castellucci’s and Jim Rugg’s *The Plain Janes* (2007), Keith Giffen’s and John Rogers’ *Blue Beetle: Shell-Shocked* (2007), Sara Varon’s *Robot Dreams* (2007), Gary Whitta’s and Ted Naifeh’s *Death, Jr.* (2007) and Bob Kane’s and Sam Keith’s *Batman: Secrets* (2007). Critiques of these novels explore the varying ways in which disabilities are represented in graphic novels.

Marc Hempel’s, Mike Carey’s and Sonny Liew’s *Re-gifters* (2007), portrays a female with disability presented as orthopedic impairment (broken leg). Mike Carey’s, Jim Fern’s and Eric Nguyen’s *Crossing Midnight* (Vol.1) (2007) depicts a male with disability presented as visual impairment. Cecil C. Castellucci’s and Jim Rugg’s *The Plain Janes* (2007), delineates a male with disability presented as other health impairment (coma). Keith Giffen’s and John Rogers’ *Blue Beetle: Shell-Shocked* (2007) describes two females with disabilities presented as orthopedic impairment (uses a wheelchair) and visual impairment. Sara Varon’s *Robot Dreams* (2007), foregrounds a character of non-specific and indeterminate gender with disability presented as orthopedic impairment (paralysis). Gary Whitta’s and Ted Naifeh’s *Death, Jr.* (2007) presents two males with disabilities presented as other health impaired (connected to tubes and twins attached at the head). Bob Kane’s and Sam Keith’s *Batman: Secrets* (2007) projects a male with disability presented as emotional disturbance.

People with disabilities have often been present in the media. People with disabilities who are increasingly reflected in our society are portrayed in the above mentioned graphic novels. Males and females with disabilities are present. A number of disabilities like orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, visual impairment, multiple impairments, hearing impairment, speech impairment, emotional disturbance, traumatic brain injury and so on got represented in these narratives. However, more females are shown as pitiable and males are presented as evil. The characters are defined by their disability; disability was not considered as an aspect of their individual traits. The disabled are presented as ‘abnormal’ as opposed to the able-bodied being depicted as ‘normal.’ A vast and exhaustive list of stereotypes used to portray people with disability includes being pitiable, pathetic, miserable, object of violence, burden, nonsexual, impotent and incapable of fully participating in everyday life and so on. These portrayals most frequently fit a negative stereotypical image.

Researchers have established unfailing problems in the way people with disabilities are represented in different forms of media like books, movies, television, comics and other forms of art, with these representations often perpetuating stereotypes. The distorted representations in art, literature, film, theatre, and other forms of artistic expressions are all the more shocking and thought provoking. In *Disability in Comic Books and Graphic Novels*,



Whalen, Foss and Gray (2016) examine how delineations of disability defy and uphold stereotypes. The history of how disability has been depicted therein is loaded with problematic tropes. The majority of these depictions still fulfilled the stereotypical portrayals.

People with disabilities are featured in graphic novels for young adults. However, the portrayals are recurrently negative. These results show that authors, illustrators, and publishers have not provided honest representations of disability. The research article stresses the importance of accurate portrayals of disability. All the more, it asserts that literature that includes honest depictions of disabilities is critical and crucial for the need of acceptance and understanding of the disability experience by those of the disability communities and the non-disabled. The texts selected for study clearly demonstrates how literary outpourings continue to implicate themselves in the objectification and marginalization of persons with disabilities thereby perpetuating stale stereotypes and stigmas.

Although the novels taken up for study may or may not specifically be directed towards teens, they are directed to an audience of adults that includes an even larger population of individuals with disabilities. At the same time, the medium of graphic novels simultaneously offers distinct prospective for moulding our understanding of disability in truly profound ways. Literary texts through presentation and exploration of themes like representation of disability experience may expose the dilemma faced by the disabled. They may propose strategies for including people with disabilities in their work and social practices. They may identify and analyze societal barriers and supports that affect the lives of people with disabilities.

This research suggests that the common historical and current representation of persons with disabilities in comics and graphic novels fails to capture the complex and real experience of disability. No one representation can fully capture the experience of a specific disability, but rather acts as a case study to more fully understand an individual experience. Even as persons with disabilities have been more fully integrated into society through the advancement of disability and educational rights, representation in graphic novels remains reflective of the stereotypes first identified over forty years ago. Through these systems of representation, readers continue to learn inaccurate truths and assumptions about disability.

Good literature arouses the imagination of the reader and a vigilant reader finds it interesting to draw meanings from layered texts filled with ambiguous usages. At the same time we have to cognize that literature is a potent weapon capable of instigating change. The current trend is one of inclusion. Following the current trend of inclusion, educating people without disabilities about the various disability disorders they might encounter has become necessary. The relevance of the study lies in its attempt to erase the boundaries that create a clear divide between the able-bodied and the disabled. It deliberately foregrounds the notion that we all may get crippled, handicapped and disabled at any moment in our lives. Covid-19 pandemic has definitely restructured and reframed our hopes and understandings about the conundrums, mysteries and purposelessness of human life. It has also taught us that there is no one universal normalcy but co-existence of multiples of new normativities.



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## Representation of Resistance: Subalternity in the Novels of Roy and Desai

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### Abstract

*The term subaltern refers to a subordinate position in terms of class, gender, race and culture. A subaltern is someone with a low ranking in a social, political or other hierarchy. It can also mean someone who has been marginalized or oppressed. It was originally used by Antonio Gramsci for the proletariat whose voice was not heard. It has since come to stand in for all subordinate subjects in society and has been revived in history to draw a distinction between the elite and the non-elite within colonized society. It has been almost thirty-five years since Ranajit Guha has taken an initiative in 1982 with his edited series on Indian historiography to provide an alternative history of the subaltern and the silenced. Since then, the crisis, prevailing in the Indian society on the lines of class, caste, gender and religion drew the attention of the subalterns. However, the changing scenario has posed new challenges for the actualization of the subaltern existence in different domains. It is, therefore, important to investigate the culture of subordination and a counter-culture of resistance. Postcolonial literature is the result of a clash between imperial culture and indigenous cultural practices. Postcolonial literature and criticism inquires into and analyses the consequences of colonization. It sees and re-examines history from the point of view of the colonized. . It examines how natives have been represented in the colonial text to create an epistemological framework that will help the colonizers to claim their domination over the 'other' party. Postcolonial theory studies this resistance and counter-discourse which emerged from the indigenous literature as a reaction against the domination of the colonizers. The colonized country suffers from the cultural domination of the colonizer, and it requires political and cultural identity. Subaltern Studies is an offshoot of recent postcolonial criticism. Resistance is the tool through which the dominated and oppressed subalterns made their appearance more prominent. Representation of the subalterns and representation of resistance has become a very vital ground to examine the colonial and postcolonial relations as they were and how they are changing. The present research paper intends to make an enquiry into the representation of subalternity and resistance in the fictions of Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai.*

**Keywords:** Subaltern, Subordination, Resistance, Postcolonial, History, Culture.

The word 'subaltern' may be applied to any person or group that is powerless, dominated, underprivileged, disadvantaged, and inferior to other dominant or powerful groups. A subaltern is, thus, anyone who is not holding a rank politically, socially,





economically and intellectually. They are subalterns because they hold a lower position in a hierarchy of command and dominance. In this way, subalterns constitute a larger population than elite in any paradigm of power and command. A subaltern group may constitute peasants, workers, children, female, tribes or minority of any kind who are denied the hegemonic power and are subjected to it. The present form of the word ‘subaltern’ is developed from late-Latin word ‘*subalternus*’ which is made of two words ‘sub-’ and ‘alternus’ where ‘sub-’ means under, beneath and behind; and ‘alternus’ means ‘one after the other’.

Italian Marxist scholar Antonio Gramsci used it for the first time in relation to class struggle in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Non-hegemonic groups or classes were addressed as subordinate, subaltern and instrumental by Gramsci. In his use of the word ‘subaltern’, Gramsci was particularly concerned with workers and peasants of the time. As in a military office, a subaltern has no autonomous initiative in any plan of construction, and they work only as a secondary person to carry out jobs already prepared for them. The subaltern class is also inferior to the dominant elite class and is supposed to follow the commands of the elite class. He stresses to revive the history of the subaltern in his phenomenal work ‘*The Prison Notebook*’ (1966). In its original Gramscian context, ‘subaltern’ referred solely to peasants who had not been integrated into Marx’s conception of the industrial capitalist system.

Subaltern studies began its impressive career in England at the end of 1970s, when conversations on subaltern themes among a small group of English and Indian led to a proposal to launch a new journal in India. Oxford University Press in New Delhi instead agreed to publish three volumes of essays called *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*. These appeared annually from 1982 and their success stimulated three more volumes in the next five years, all edited by Ranjit Guha. At the inception of the project, Guha was concerned with the history of the common folk that had been subjected to the historiography of nationalist and Marxist writers. His aim was to address any group dominated by the state. The term ‘subaltern’ has been used as a general attribute of subordination in South Asian studies to address the issues of class, caste, gender, religion, age, and office. However, when talking from a particular point of view, especially in consideration to the first six volumes of *Subaltern Studies*, it addressed mainly workers, agricultural labourers, and the peasants only. In the later years, the concept of subaltern became a hot topic of discussion in post-colonial criticism. In 1985 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak brought language and epistemological enquiry in the periphery of subaltern studies. In her very influential work ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ she questions the approach of the subalternists in dealing with the subaltern concept.

Though the history of resistance can be said as old as the history of colonialism and domination but in the current scenario, the systematic study of resistance is rooted in Marxism and mainly in postcolonialism. The modern enlightenment project and postmodern denial of it have brought a paradigmatic shift in the critical stand of the thinkers and provided them with a new perspective to review all colonial situations and propagation. Resistance is one of the devices which have been analyzed by means of multiple approaches by social and

literary thinkers. The multiple approaches in examining resistance resulted in the pluralistic and discursive conception of resistance and made it very difficult to get a static and complete definition of resistance. The form of resistance is always conditioned by various factors like its structure (organized or unorganized), situation, context, culture, agency, place, aims, ideology, and opposition. Domination and subordination are the forms of power play that works on various assumptions and impositions. They are all directed towards seizing the individuality and agency of the person. The core intention of the dominant is to turn its subject into a null entity without any identity. However, resistance seeks to recover that identity and consciousness. Subordination seeks to distance the two groups: the dominant and the subaltern. A subaltern realises its identity in the form of difference from the dominant. The recurring incidents of marginalization and suppression leave a subaltern in a state of dissatisfaction.

The subalterns interpret their identity with reference to the values suggested by the dominant. Thus, their interpretations of self or the identification of self do not completely belong to them. The practices like acceptance-rejection-neutrality, good-bad, faithfulness-disloyalty, etc. are created outwardly for the subaltern by the elite. His/her behaviour is judged on the standards made by the powerful groups. The effort to see the self is not easy in any way for the down and subordinated. Since perceiving anything is conditioned by perceptions and interpretations, it is not free from the hegemonic discourses. Secondly, this clash of personal ideas and other's ideas does not necessarily results in questioning the artificiality of morality, but sometimes in punishing oneself too, as in *The God of Small Things*, "Velutha shrugged and took the towel away to wash. And rinse. And beat. And wring. As though it was his ridiculous, disobedient brain" (Roy, 214). However, this self-arduous attitude cannot hold the fire for a long within, as it does not fully satisfy the agony. It takes time to break the so-called moral lines and laws, but the dissatisfaction and sense of difference grows on to erupt someday.

Desai, on the other hand, depicts a subordination that causes mental and emotional suffering for the subaltern. Unlike Roy, the characters of Desai undergo some serious psychic upheaval where their philosophical positioning are in juxtaposition to the unacceptable reality of the outer world. She explores, again and again, the fractured identities of the modern men. The novels clearly show that apart from the strategic social subalternity there is psychological subalternity that forces an individual to crave for something else that s/he possesses. Throughout his life, Sampath was thought to be a sluggish idiot yet he is a self-reflecting person. His disagreement with the prevalent mode of life is expressed when one day he was thinking about his life,

How he hated his life. It was a never-ending flow of misery. It was a prison he had been born into. The one time he had a little bit of fun, he was curtailed and punished. He was born unlucky, that's what it was. All about him the neighborhood houses seemed to rise like a trap, a maze of staircases and walls with windows that opened only to look into one another. (Desai, HGO 43)



Arundhati Roy highlights the hierarchical power structure in a patriarchal society in Kerala that is already full of numerous social inequalities. She maintains an atmosphere of tension around her characters that pushes the readers to catch up on the unpleasant happenings around the characters. An intense subordination has been imposed on these characters, which sometimes result even in the death of the subalterns. The cruel, unfair and unjustified subordination is forced on them without considering them a living entity. Their voices are either dislocated or ignored, and their existence is not worth considering. In the novel, *The God of Small Things*, Estha was more of a thinker in the two (Rahel and Estha). Most of the time we see him compromising with the circumstances, yet we cannot deny the presence of self-consciousness in him. He used to grow silent as the days pass. In later years, it was hard to notice him when he was among people. He grew more and more accustomed to the background. The act of getting vanished was his conscious effort to contemplate his own self. “He began to do the housework. As though in his own way he was trying to earn his keep” (Roy, 11). He does not want to be an object of other’s desire. His denial of his own presence was the mark of his consciousness. The dominant, even if they want, cannot deny this presence of consciousness in the subaltern. They are well aware of it though they would like to hide it. Vellya Pappen was anxious about his son. He, like his masters, was well aware of Velutha’s attitude. “It was not what he said, but the way he said it. Not what he did, but the way he did it” (Roy, 76). His self-awareness destroyed the peace of the giant personalities of the society.

The questioning spirit, self-awareness, and action of the individual are always conditioned by a particular ‘intent’. This ‘intent’ may bring a variety of ideas in one’s mind depending on the circumstances, individual subjects and the things desired. However, in one word, this intent signifies ‘freedom’ for thinking, acting and living a life of one’s own choices and selections. Biju and cook represent the struggling individuals who want to earn money to transform their social condition. When Biju was tired of injustice and humiliation he was subjected to, he bursts out saying, “Without us living like pigs,” said Biju, “what business would you have? This is how you make your money, paying us nothing because you know we can’t do anything, making us work day and night because we are illegal...” (Desai, IoL, 188). However, resistance is a matter of an individual’s choice as to when s/he wants to put the thoughts into action. In *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, Pinky does not wait for her complaints to grow enough as to erupt someday, rather she decides to search her way and proceed on that before her emotional blast. She contemplates,

...her brother was quite right. There was no reason for her to drown herself in a bucket of tears, and neither would she sit and suffer through feeling like some faulty firework, with all the sparks flying inside her instead of blazing outward in a display that would surely create some sort of effect, make some sort of an explosion. And an explosion, she knew, is never without a certain amount of satisfaction. (HGO, 111)

Different things intervene in the psychological and philosophical construction of identity every time, and the person is compelled to recreate it. Yet recreation and



modification of identity is never a simple process. The person seeks freedom to model and remodel one's psychic perception of self. The socio-political setting of the characters has made their method of struggle fairly distinct. The authors have provided the characters with the uniqueness of their personality, which further added to the diversity of their struggle. The idea of freedom operates at two levels. At first level, an individual craves for materialistic freedom: freedom to buy anything, freedom to do any job, freedom to move anywhere, etc. The fulfilment of these desires is important to bring confidence in the individuals. We can see the labourers fighting for their right to get the job of their choice, "We are laborers on the tea plantations, coolies dragging heavy loads, soldiers. And are we allowed to become doctors and government workers, owners of the tea plantations? No! We are kept at the level of servants" (Roy, 158). At another level, the desire to be free tends to be more intense and urgent because it is spiritual in nature. It is the freedom of the being and establishment of an agency that is forbidden in a hegemonic hierarchical system. The effect of power in the hierarchical order of the social and political system is enough to dislocate or overlook the active will in the subaltern.

Recognition of that spirit will require providing them with space and the intention of the dominant is to erase that space. Chacko reiterates this idea when he tells Ammu that she does not have 'Locusts Stand I' and "What's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine" (Roy, 57). However, does that stop Ammu from thinking about herself? Does that stop her from advancing on her way to love? Or has it made Ammu afraid of the big ones of society? The answer is no. She was not afraid of advancing on her way of love. She kept loving Velutha in her heart. Her grievances against societal duplicity also continue to accumulate. "It was what she had battling inside her. An unmixable mix. The infinite tenderness of motherhood and the reckless rage of a suicide bomber" (Roy, 44). Ammu was struggling within to get out of the suppressing morality and patriarchal norms. Ammu grew tired of their proprietary handling of her. "She wanted her body back. It was hers" (Roy, 222). She could not hold her anger within forever. So, she was waiting for the right time for her desires to be fulfilled.

When suppression and humiliation cross their limits, they have to face overt forces against themselves in the form of protest and social revolution. Primarily, these overt forces germinate from perceiving the difference in behaviour of the dominant for the subordinates. The difference in behaviour for different groups creates an emotional imbalance and mental tension that lead to inward agitation. This agitation is responsible for an inward upheaval that further leads an individual to resist. There are a number of acts that can be counted as a clear signal of open resistance. The behaviour may be that of the disapproval in the form of revolutionary agitation (particularly a group act) where the suppressed group forms a collective either for non-agreement or to demand the authority for betterment. The novels *Inheritance of Loss* and *The God of Small Things* projects such protests again and again: one in the North-East place of Kalimpong and other in the South state Kerala. Local people could not put up with the injustice, corruption, negligence and peripheral attitude of government

anymore. They demand their own land i.e. Gorkhaland. Desai presents a vivid picture of protest handled by the locals of Kalimpong:

...the new posters in the market referring to old discontents, the slogans scratched and painted on the side of government offices and shops. "We are stateless," they read. "It is better to die than live as slaves," "We are constitutionally tortured. Return our land from Bengal..."

... But then one day fifty boys, members of the youth wing of the GNLF, gathered to swear an oath at Mahakaldara to fight to the death for the formation of a homeland, Gorkhaland. Then they marched down the streets of Darjeeling, took a turn around the market and the mall. "Gorkhaland for Gorkhas. We are the liberation army." They were watched by the pony men and their ponies... (IoL, 126)

Similarly, we find a description of the Naxalite movement in Roy's novel. The Naxalites have struggled so long for their land and rights, yet they have nothing in their hands, "They organised peasants into fighting cadres, seized land, expelled the owners and established People's Courts to try Class Enemies" (Roy, 68).

Resistance is neither just an act that has been shown outwardly through violent ways, nor it is something that always grows inside for liberation of an individual or a group. Resistance is also a provision for a hopeful future. However, they are imagined and attempted to be fruitful in the long run, for people of other time (may be the next generation) or other groups. The initiator may fail to bring changes for itself, but the agency within, let not stop the dreamer from dreaming. No one knows the result of such a dream venture, but this hope provides the dreamer to uphold one's courage in the present adverse situation. The cook in *Inheritance of Loss* sends his son to America to become a big and rich man so that he can see his son free from slavery. All his life he has just obeyed his masters. He cannot go beyond serving his masters, but his son can do many good things in his life. His son can free the cook from slavery with his earned money. Moreover, he has sent his son to U.S.A. which is a prestigious act in itself. He takes pride in it. "Her (doctor's) son was there as well. He shared this with a doctor! The most distinguished personage in town" (IoL, 85). He does not know whether his son will come with money or not, or he will be out of a life of servitude or not, but his hope made his life bearable to him.

*The God of Small Things* presents some more examples of implicit resistance where the rebel does not want to change anything but s/he is too full to accept the filth of the world any further. In such condition, an individual like Estha withdrew himself from the decision-making world around himself. His retreat was not meant to stop him from taking decision for anyone. He rather did not want to be an object of other's thought and decision.

Over time he had acquired the ability to blend into the background of wherever he was—into bookshelves, gardens, curtains, doorways, streets—to appear inanimate, almost invisible to the untrained eye. It usually took strangers a while to notice him even when they were in the same room with him. It took them even longer to notice that he never spoke. Some never noticed at all. Estha occupied very little space in the world. (Roy, 10-11)





The subject position of a subaltern makes him/her actualize his/her identity from two (let there be two categories for the time being: dominant and subordinate) passages: one as s/he really is and another how s/he is perceived by the superiors. The latter method of interpreting and defining one's identity has a long-lasting effect on the individuals. This line of argument clearly describes the dilemma and alienation of the Judge (IoL) and Pappachi (TGST). They are ill at ease with their Indian-ness of which they are a part. Their soul belonged to the colonial states ruled by supposedly intelligent and sophisticated race of Englishmen. They revered everything that is English. However, it put them only in a strange condition. Gyan ridicules the judge to be a man "with the fake English accent and the face powdered pink and white over dark brown" (IoL, 176). Pappachi was also a great imitator of English ways of life and "Ammu said that Pappachi was an incurable British CCP, which was short for *chhi-chhi poach* and in Hindi meant shit-wiper. Chacko said that the correct word for people like Pappachi was *Anglophile*" (Roy, 52). Thus, double consciousness of the subordinate is capable of disfiguring one's idea of identity. The person before being conscious of oneself becomes conscious of the other's idea of his/her. The idea of double consciousness is best materialised in the character of Vellya Pappen. His two eyes symbolise his two consciousness: his stone eye stands for his lack of self-awareness and from the other eye he only receives the message of loyalty for his benefactor. Since his one eye is lost, he cannot see himself i.e. he is unable to find his identity. His other eye is the symbol of grace and favour by his masters so that he can perceive himself only from their given eye i.e. from an available perspective.

In the novels of Kiran Desai, the issue of identity is related to the physical and emotional displacement of the characters and their existential quest. Her characters, again and again, express the loss of roots in their setting. The person who recognises the clutches of oppressive power over itself tends to deny and escape from it. In her novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, Kiran Desai subverts the political and religious notions through her satire. These high ideals of human life, especially in a place like India where they are worshipped, have settled in the commonplace and everyday world of the people. She argues that religion is created by people, and it's not a given thing. The satirical representation helps us to view how seriousness can be silly and a self-imposed foolery. For those who are involved in the whole state of affairs, it is so sacred a thing, but the observer finds it quite hilarious and ridiculous. She describes how petty considerations acquire such big features that they turn out to be so difficult to handle:

Below his tree, two fervent camps of devotees had been formed: one was adamant that the monkeys be removed so as to save the Monkey Baba and the holy atmosphere of his hermitage; the other was furious that these sacred animals were to be thus humiliated and turned from their rightful home. The battle lines had been drawn and everybody even remotely associated with the dispute felt compelled to involve themselves and make their voices heard. (HGO, 158)

A brand-new religion has been made in the name of Sampath who earlier was disrespected by everyone. The bureaucratic system of India of the time was also ridiculed.



The Brigadier, his soldiers, and the district collector, in spite of being exceptional personalities, are failed to tackle this Shahkot hullabaloo.

Denial and subversion of rules take a more deadly turn in *The God of Small Things*. It is a novel of revolt. It tells a tale of resistance even through its little characters. Estha and Rahel being angry with Baby Kochamma do not appreciate and enjoy her song and when, “she looked at Estha and Rahel, waiting for them to say “Coo-coo.” They didn’t” (Roy, 87). More than anything else it proclaims to be a demonstration of fractured love laws of society. Baby Kochamma loved Father Mulligan but leads a life of celibacy that is forbidden for a woman in her religion. She denied bringing anyone else in her life, and only Father Mulligan’s memories can traverse into her thought. Though not accepted by society and religion she fantasises Mulligan after his death as her life partner, in a plane where physicality dissolves.

Once he was dead, Baby Kochamma stripped Father Mulligan of his ridiculous saffron robes and re-clothed him in the Coca-Cola cassock she so loved. (Her senses feasted, between changes, on that lean, concave, Christ like body.) She snatched away his begging bowl, pedicured his horny Hindu soles and gave him back his comfortable sandals. She re-converted him into the high-stepping camel that came to lunch on Thursdays. (Roy, 298)

The study of resistance calls for an analysis of the everyday behaviour of the subaltern. It is the site where many stories are created, performed, ignored and sometimes not noticed at all. The language of everyday behaviour has much to say about the resistance of the subaltern groups. Giving words to one’s feeling is a direct attempt to show agreement or disagreement with any logic, but language is not words only. Expression of emotions and thinking is well reflected in non-verbal language too. The novelists have portrayed the characters in a political and socio-cultural setup where they are subordinated and suppressed. The subalterns, though, are not powerful enough to oppose the dominant directly, they are determined and face power in different indirect manners. Their individual level of resistance makes a complete subordination impossible. Roy has very aptly delineated the realistic picture of the subalterns in her novel. Each line written by Roy shows resistance. It is not just a story of a woman who has not given her due rights in a male-dominated world, rather the novel highlights the structural subversion of powerless irrespective of gender, caste, and class. She acclaims,

...my writing is not really about nations and histories, it’s about power. About the paranoia and ruthlessness of power. About the physics of power. I believe that the accumulation of vast unfettered power by a state or a country, a corporation or an institution—or even an individual, a spouse, friend or sibling—regardless of ideology, results in excesses.... (Roy, OPG, 11-12)

As the novels of Kiran Desai portray a sense of loss, disillusionment and exile, the struggling spirit of the characters cannot be overlooked. They start from a state of loss and fight against the situation that has made them at loss and thus they gradually grow. They all have a bright dream in their imagination, a better tomorrow that can be achieved some day if



tried honestly. The indomitable will of the characters show their ability to acknowledge their identity and their efforts to maintain its integrity.

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## Futility of Violence in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not, Child*

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### Abstract

*Ngugi Wa Thiong'o is a celebrated Kenyan writer and East Africa's leading novelist. He authored several novels, plays, short stories and essays most of which are written in Gikuyu. He criticised the evils of colonization in his works. His Weep Not, Child (1964) is the first major novel in English written by an East African. It portrays the tragedy of a family, that was drawn into the conflict of Kenyan Independence during the state of emergency and the violence of the Mau Mau rebellion. It specifically explores the harmful consequences of dispossessing the people of their ancestral land. In this novel, Ngugi projected violence as futile and destructive. Taking revenge on the oppressors by Boro, who fought in World War II ultimately led to the ruin of the budding life of his brother, Njoroge, the protagonist of the novel. Violence didn't bring any positive change, rather it brought awful destruction. This paper aims to bring out the futility of violence in the novel Weep Not, Child.*

**Keywords:** Futility of violence, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Weep Not, Child*

*"Violence does in truth recoil upon the violent and the schemer falls into the pit which he digs for another."*

- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Violence is never a solution to any problem. History has proved it several times. Even our nation got freedom through non violence only. Violence leads to violence and it triggers a never ending cycle of horrors. Also, violence turns detrimental not only to the doer but also to the whole community. This truth is revealed in the novel *Weep Not, Child* by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, the unforgettable writer set a landmark in Postcolonial African Literature by his expression of the harsh impact of colonialism up on the Africans. His original name was James Thiong'o Ngugi. But he adopted his traditional name to expose his opposition to colonialism. Born on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1938 in Limuru, Kenya, he grew up in colonialized motherland. He brought out the politics of language that affected him deeply during his childhood days in the work, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. He graduated from Makerere University in 1963 and from Leeds University in 1964. He worked as a professor in several leading universities. He is a versatile writer as is evident from his production of several novels, plays, short stories and essays and that too differing widely apart in a variety of themes from children's literature, colonialism, traditionalism, significance of one's culture, nationalism, social and literary criticism,

infighting etc. His notable novels include *Weep Not, Child*, *The River Between*, *A Grain of Wheat*, *Petals of Blood*. His short story collections are *A Meeting in the Dark*, *Secret Lives and Other Stories*, *Minutes of Glory and Other Stories*. His prominent plays are *The Black Hermit*, *This Time Tomorrow* and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*. His essays *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics* and *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for the Cultural Freedom* are worth mentioning.

*Weep Not, Child* is Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's first novel, which gained fame and recognition and established him as a budding writer. It also has the reputation of being the first English novel to be published by an East African. It was written by Thiong'o when he was a student at Makerere University. It is set in a Gikuyu village during the Emergency period. It brought out the evil effects of the Mau Mau Rebellion. It specifically portrays the tragedy of a family that was drawn into the conflict of Kenya's Independence from Britain. It deals with the evil consequences of dispossessing the people of their ancestral land. Ben Okri praised the novel as, "One of the signal novels to emerge from an artist listening to both the well of tradition and the troubled oracles of his time." The novel consists of two parts and eighteen chapters. Part 1 is 'The Waning Light' and Part 2 is 'Darkness Falls'. The subtitles indicate the tragedy brought out by the Mau Mau rebellion and violence.

*Weep Not, Child* has a simple and obvious story line. Ngunjiri was a worker in Mr. Howlands' plantation. He had two wives, Njeri and Nyokabi and five sons Boro, Kori, Kamau, Njoroge and Mwangi. Mwangi died in World War II. Ngunjiri wanted the White men to leave their country, so that he could get his land back. He was working on the land which he once owned. Nyokabi sent her son Njoroge to School. Kamau was apprenticed to a carpenter named Nganga. Njoroge was assisted by his friend Mwihaki, the daughter of Jacobo. Jacobo owned the land in which Ngunjiri and his family were living. Once Jacobo compelled the strikers to return to their work. Ngunjiri was very much angry and he started attacking Jacobo and it initiated a riot. As a consequence of it, Ngunjiri was expelled from his job and the land. The family moved to Nganga's land. Two and a half years passed after this incident. The whole community was in a state of perplexity, due to the violence of the Mau Mau rebellions.

Howlands and Jacobo arranged for the arrest of Kori, Njeri and Ngunjiri. Njoroge's education was also under threat by the Mau Mau terrorists. Mwihaki returned to the village. Njoroge and Mwihaki were happy to meet each other. Jacobo was kind to Njoroge. Njoroge was sent out of school in order to be investigated by the police. Jacobo was murdered. Police doubted that Ngunjiri was involved in the murder. So, Njoroge was tortured inhumanly. Howlands pitied him and arranged for his release. The reality was that Ngunjiri did not Murder Jacobo. Boro killed Jacobo, because he was firm in the belief that it was the only way to avenge his brother's death. Ngunjiri passed away. Boro again turned ferocious and murdered Howlands. Njoroge had no other way, but to give up his education and to work in a dress shop. He was frustrated to the maximum extent. He met Mwihaki. Both accepted that they loved each other but they could not be united as the sense of duty to their families laid on them. Njoroge tried to commit suicide but Nyokabi stopped him and brought him home.



In this novel, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o focused on the futility of violence and its devastating impact even upon those not involved in violence. There are many instances in the novel that validate this view. There was a strike to plead in favour of more rights for the Africans. Ngotho already nurtured bitter feelings against whites as his land was under their control. So, he wanted to participate in this strike, but he was also afraid that he would be sent out of his job. He then took part in a rally where Boro and his friend Kiarie were about to speak. At that time, the Police brought in Jacobo and he forced the labourers to return to work. Unable to control himself, Ngotho rushed to the stage and assaulted Jacobo. This violent act ended up in a riot. The riot was immediately suppressed. Ngotho was fired from his job and his family was sent out from Jacobo's land. Ngotho's violent act proved futile. Moreover it was detrimental to himself and his family.

Violence by the Mau Mau revolutionaries also created an atmosphere of fear in the village. Njoroge's education was under threat by the Mau Mau. People were afraid both with the police and the Mau Mau, as they used to slit the throats of suspected people. The harmony was collapsed and the village people led a life of fear. Mau Mau revolutionaries who thought that they would bring freedom to the people were actually ruining the peace of the people and spoiling the education of their youngsters. They could not achieve Independence from the British, but their violent acts led to the loss of harmony and serenity in the village.

Njoroge and his friends were on a church retreat. Police murdered their leader for his independent spirit. It further enraged Boro. So he murdered Jacobo. Boro's mindless action disempowered his family. Njoroge's studies came to an abrupt end and he was brutally tortured by the police. Police were in suspicion that Ngotho was involved in the murder. So, they treated Njoroge cruelly. Fortunately, Howlands arranged for the release of Njoroge. Boro's murderous act resulted in a series of troubles to his family, but he couldn't accept that his violence ended detrimental. He believed that it was the only way to avenge his brother's death in the war. He experienced violence as she had been to war. He had near death experience. So, he could not settle down to peaceful methods of opposition. Ngotho added fuel to the fire by narrating the story of how their family lost their land. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o explained his mind set.

Boro thought of his father who had fought in the war only to be dispossessed. Boro too had gone to war against Hitler. He had gone to Egypt, Jerusalem and Burma. He had seen things. He had often escaped death narrowly. But the thing he could not forget was the death of his step brother Mwangi. For whom or for what had he died? (2)

Boro was angry over the fact that his family members were pushed into the war. They had no cause to fight. His brother's death was constantly stinging him. He considered it meaningless to die in the war. He wanted to compensate the death of his brother by indulging in violent activities and killing the White settlers.

Ngotho was tortured as he was considered the murderer, but he confessed to help Kamau, who was also under suspicion. After undergoing torture, Ngotho passed away. Boro visited his father before he had died. Boro got enraged and he killed Howlands. Boro thought



that he brought justice to his father's death, but his murderous deed affected Njoroge extremely. He had to give up his education and to work in a dress shop. Also, Njoroge could not unite with Muihaki. Both missed their fathers and had to fulfill that duty to their families, so they could not be together. Njoroge's life went completely out of course due to the harsh and violent deeds of Boro. Boro's actions killed the happiness of Njoroge and Muihaki.

Boro undertook violence, because of the violent experiences during World War II. It was difficult for him to leave the hatred. He could not tolerate the death of his brother Mwangi in World War II. Boro and Mwangi were dragged to fight in World War II. They had no reason to fight, but they were forced to participate in the war. He wanted to take revenge for his brother's death. His father's recollection of the loss of his ancestral land and working there as a labourer also upset him. He began to take revenge on the British colonisers, but it paved way for a series of a brutal acts. Also the Mau Mau protest caused disorder in the village. Though Boro saw that his revengeful deeds in turn yielded harm to his family, he could not give it up. He himself admitted that he had lost his aim and all that he had in mind was to exact revenge. Mau Mau Lieutenant asked him, "Don't you believe in anything?". Boro replied, "No nothing. Except revenge." The Lieutenant was shocked and asked him whether he didn't care about regaining the lost land. Boro said, "The lost land will come back to us maybe. But I have lost too many of those whom I loved for land to mean much to me. It would be a cheap victory." Boro simply wanted all the White men to suffer. He thought that freedom was nearly an illusion. His only intention was to kill the settlers. Boro said, "Unless you kill, you will be killed. So you go on killing and destroying. It's law of nature." Boro stopped fighting for the cause of regaining their land. He became obsessed with killing. He started reflecting the violence that he experienced during the war.

When he finally killed Howlands, he explained why he killed Jacobo. "He betrayed black people. Together you killed many sons of the land. You raped our women. And finally you killed my father. Have you anything to say in your defence?". He didn't get any sense of peace. He was just finding reasons to continue his violent attitude. He didn't get any relief after killing Howlands.

The violent deeds of the characters ended up detrimental not only to themselves but also to their families. Ngotho's violence towards Jacobo ended detrimental to himself. He lost his job and his family was sent out of the land. Violence by the Mau Mau revolutionaries didn't achieve anything, rather it created tension and rivalry in the village. Boro's murder of Jacobo caused Njoroge to be arrested by putting an abrupt end to his hard earned education. Ngotho underwent tortures due to the murder of Jacobo. It eventually led to his death. Again Boro killed Howlands as a revenge for Ngotho's death. But it led to the separation of Njoroge and Muihaki. Njoroge was driven to suicide. Though Muihaki and Njoroge loved each other and even Jacobo was kind to Njoroge, the harmony was spoiled. Also, Stephen Howlands, the son of Howlands and Njoroge had much in common. But, they could not maintain their friendship.

Through these instances in the novel, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o projected that violence is





futile and brings ruin to all. Thus, the futility of violence is brought out through ample examples in the novel *Weep Not, Child* by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o.

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## An Analytical Study of Modernized Regionality of Indian Myths in Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*

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### Abstract

*Regional literature is the greatest creation of the Indian plethora and a live picture of old days myths of Ramayana, Mahabharata and other legendary heroes. It becomes more poignant when the natives of any region value their language and understand its culture with a scientific explanation of facts. By learning & reading literary pieces from the regions, the power of the native tongue multiplies and intensifies the words that create an impact on the soul. With the flow of time, regional myths were also modernized in literature and presented with an amalgamated picture perfect. New pop star of mythology and a flag holder of modern regionality Amish Tripathi is an emerging force in this field. His Shiva Trilogy is a pack of wonderful books that enwrapped modern-day fire issues with the regional concept of lord Shiva and put the book market on fire. Various regional concepts of Indian society are dipped in colour of rationality and presented with authentic ink. The caste system, Vikarnas or untouchables, discrimination between rich and poor, outcaste Nagas, political interests, puppet king, feminist ethics, sura and asura concept, Ardhnarishwara, humanization of Gods and Anachronism are dealt in this paper well.*

**Keywords:** Ethno-nationalism, Modernized Regionality, Indian Myths, Transformation.

### Introduction

Man, the most intellectual of beings is always pre occupied with the concept of existence. In his search of self, he sometimes relies on Darwin's origin of species and on other extreme; he delves deep for his roots in ancient myths and cultural heritage. Cultural roots allured him and a new trend of mythological reading emerged on the screen of Indian Literature. The most technical generation started to dig out their roots and involved in finding out the present signification of prevalent myths. Myths are not the product of one day, they evolved this form after a transformation of centuries. It's a general notion that mythological tales first came in form of traditional oral tales and mouth-to-mouth transmitted stories about local chivalry. Later on, these were circulated in written form with locale tint in folk tales and rituals. According to region, different sub cultures took the same stories and transfigured them. But with a change in time, these rituals industrialized into stiffed superstitions and everywhere enchained in prejudices. On third stage of advancement, when awareness spread these age-old stories were elucidated and premeditated under a new trend- archetypical criticism. This new trend of literature, Mythological reading allured and captured the taste of

masses. There emerged various elucidations of myths. In modern time also, every genuine head of mythological studies interpreted it with a unique perspective.

Myths turn out to be a conception or an ideology which emerges after centuries from the fight, flight, fright and an extensive reaction of a community to establish perfection in its own way. Sometimes it was explained and treated as half-truth. But Amish believes, “Myths are nothing but jumbled memories of a true past. A past buried under mounds of earth and ignorance.” Myth is not mithya now, it is a thriving cultural means that people are actively re-engaging and re-involving with, in new ways it gives meaning to them and satisfy their rational mind. From Tagore through Naipaul to Amish, reading of myths and literary scenario is thoroughly changed by the writers who are acquiring their independent identity. They are not watching India through the veil of western lens but they have created a plethora of liberal interpretations in mythological trend. Today God is not any supernatural power, it is just the proper use of inner self and exposure of inherent skills, it is the story of a selfless entity as depicted by Amish Tripathi. Though on the divergent side, “Ancient Hindu seers knew myth as mithya” that is, according to Devdutt Pattanaik, “a frame of reference” to “Sat” or truth (Myth=Mithya 1). However, for the evolved mind the definition of God varies depending upon our intellectual evolution and it is the human potential that can humanize God or Godify human as well. Devdutt Pattanaik demystified all relevant myths in his books and solved the reverberated enigma of myths.

Ashok K. Banker *Ramayana Series* is a landmark with various abstract qualities personified; Ashwin Sanghi *Krishna's key* is a thrilled story around such theme and Divakaruni is also a master mind in her *Palace of illusion*, in the depiction of Draupadi's character. The new steel nib of mythology - Amish Tripathi penned down an awestruck and astounding view of lord Shiva and divulged Him from a mythical figure to a common, blood - throbbing man who with due time established himself as a myth. Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy is an “epic fantasy” that elaborate journey of God Shiva from “a humanist point of view” in an “odd blend of fantasy, reality, and speculative history” (Chatterjee, Humanizing Theography 75). Tripathi perceives Shiva as “a person in flesh and blood” whose actions rose him to such height in mythology (Preface to Shiva Trilogy, Immortals xv).

In *Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas* and *The Oath of Vayuputras*, the journey of Shiva is depicted, how he emerged as a man of high order and values. In present context, the social, cultural, and political motives in Shiva Trilogy are sued to be symbolic image of the Twenty-first century discourses namely ethno-nationalism, climate change, counter-terrorism, and nuclearization (Dutt and Bansal, 1-10). Shiva's struggle in this trio of books, against Somras is, therefore, multidimensional as it includes opposition to the social, cultural, and political conflicts caused by Somras. This ‘Surrogate’ history of Amish springs from a doubt in Indian historiography that occurred in the colonial period under British rule because during that period of conflict “history had taken over from Purana as the dominant mode of reckoning the past....as ethnology's surrogate” (Guha 3-11). Present historical analysis of myth basically refers to the hermeneutical exercise of ‘Euhemerism’ that well-thought-out as “so-called gods as... mortal men who had, through the respect of their

descendants, become falsely worshipped as gods” (Bidney 379; Cooke 397). History and mythological tales are blind folded by think-tank of any particular time. Kali, the Queen of Naga Community in *Shiva Trilogy*, also expresses such distrust “for history is written by victors. They can write it however they want. The losers are always remembered the way the victors portray them” (Oath, 205). This doubt of Indian historiography boosts Tripathi to turn to history grounded on myths or Puranic history. But his returning back to Puranas or Hindu mythology that takes place “after spending many years in the wilderness of atheism” echoes the religious shot of humanities indorsing “a post-secular project of resacralization” at the crack of the Twenty-first century (Immortals xv; McClure 144).

The readers in the Twenty-first century are actually a Post-modern humanity, living in the ecosphere after the “death of God” (Paul 5). To present a Puranic history of Shiva’s life grounded on historical fact and scientific truth, he used cacophony of opinions. In doing so and to re-revise the pre-historic measures he re-forms the contemporary jams of life such as terrorism, ecocide, war on terror and the post human stride of humanity (Adiseshiah and Hildyard 1-13). The whole action of the novels revolves around the godly drink ‘Somras’ and its evident in text that manufacturing of Somras requires “massive amounts of Saraswati waters...during processing” and its mass production in Meluha induces river depletion in the Western Sea and desertification of the land in the South of Rajasthan (Oath, 17). Holding accountable Somras for the plight of Branga and Naga people, Tripathi has “contextualised” the “ecological destruction” of Saraswati river in present day “as a method of group destruction, drawing a link between ecocide and genocide” (Lindgren 2).

In fact, the institution of God is still at a crucial debate after the Darwin’s evolution theory and Nietzsche’s announcement of death of God. Tripathi recuperates “a lesson lost in the depths of time and ignorance” (Immortals xv) and unveiled the hidden aspects of modernized regionality of Indian myths related to Shiva. Image of Amish’s Shiva is not the same image of ash smeared, naked, trident bearer, desolated and introvert being or a god who is easy to please and gives everything to his devotees, a figure to be afraid or a linga which fulfills all desires, a mythical figure with image of ganga, snake, his blue throat, ghosts and goblins as his followers, or a saintly figure sitting on the icy platform, wearing rudraksh and bearing a third eye. But he demystified all these myths related to Shiva and established Him as a man of high values. He spelled out the mythical image of Shiva and presented Him as livid Shiva, the Mahadev, the God of Gods, Destroyer of Evil, a Passionate lover, Fierce warrior, Consummate dancer, Charismatic leader, all-powerful yet incorruptible, a quick wit accompanied by an equally quick and fearsome temper, overall a multifaceted personality. Like a man of flesh and blood, he also carries the burden of past on his shoulders and it haunts him in nightmare. Lord Shiva who has no past, has no story of origin is a myth for world, is feeling heavy his shoulder in Amish book but at last relieve this burden by his karmas as is said in Bhagwadgeeta:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।  
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥2.47॥

Karmaṇyēvātīkārastē mā ḥpālṣu anēkamāka

Mā karmaḥpal'hēturpūrmā tē caṅkō 'stavakarmaṇi ||2.47||

Despite having criticism of “clunky language and sloppy grammar”, Amish was also acclaimed the best in his portrayal of all minute details related to architectural designs, awareness for hygiene, drainage systems, discovery of copper, cotton clothes and administrative skills in Meluha in *Shiva Trilogy*. Somras is a drink of gods in Indian mythology and it is critically analyzed in reference to its after effect on Nagas and Brangas. It works as background for every evil and when Shiva realized it, he vowed to take it out from equation and demolish it entirely. Amish though took all mythological facts in root of his story and blended well it with his fantasy and knowledge of history. His family background of Banars worked well in blending of ancient and modern, even in name of towns also, Kahmir, Takshila, Karachapa, Lothal, Devagiri etc. Meluhan tradition of ‘But the laws cannot be broken, my Lord. Not even for you’ proved Meluha a Ramrajya but its Shiva who believes its contrary that ‘Some traditions are meant to be broken’.

Like a mythological lord of centuries ago, He uses marijuana to get rid of his guilt of past and numb his senses. All regional myths in modern context are demystified and deconstructed significantly in this trio of books. An overabundance of countless mythological symbols is layered here as symbol of AUM, Nagas as his favorite people, importance of Sarasvati river, his love for Kashi, his blue throat, somras as poison, trident his invention, his obsession for Sati, his art of dancing and singing, his liking for raw milk, tiger skin as his garment, elephant head Ganesha, warrior Kartikeya, Parvati from Parvetswar, Kali a fierce goddess. These glorious modernized local myths are quick-wittedly used for evolving character of Shiva and it shows his transformation from a mythical lord whose name cannot be uttered to a man whose actions and decisions take goodness in equation and united this Saptasindhu in one and all compact state. Indian scriptures are abundantly filled with praise songs of Lord Shiva and Amish Tripathi has aptly used it and transformed mythical image of Shiva totally.

Amish Tripathi dusted off cob webs over mithya concerned with Shiva and illuminated this cool-hot dude in new mythological trend. He explored well myth of Mahadev, untouchability in form of vikrama, phenomena of evil, Sati-a headstrong and brave princess, her father-real conspirator with Bhrgu, Shiva close soulmate Veerbhadra, warrior Kartik who was called the God of war, fierce kali, elephant head intellectual lord Ganesha, religious significance of Kashi, a public notion about Nagas, caste system, role of Manu-Smriti, anachronism, new light on concept of Sura-Asura, Rudra and Shiva and actual implementation of Ardhnarishwar in his *Shiva trilogy*. It is Mahadev who learns at last, “just because someone is different doesn’t make them evil” and established the ultimate truth. This trio of books focused on religion, truth and the constant battle between the good and evil in a very common language. Amish while writing for free, globalized, techno-rich, data dating and popular culture of India has not forgotten rich cultural heritage and golden age of India. He voluntarily revived long forgotten heroic age and made it more enticing and appetizing by spinning it with fantasy. In fact, he has taken Vedic concepts from the scriptures and

presented it with scientific explanations; terrorist attack to deformed Naga babies, Maika tradition, working of Somras on human bodies, abolition of concept of Vikramas, secret revelation of Shiva blue throat, destruction caused by Daivi Astras and Zoroastrian elements connected with present day Iran. He has also added some spice to story by creating myriad of emotions and distributing them proportionately among characters. passionate and emotional scenes between Shiva and Sati, picture perfect locales, reference of soap, a modern coined word- liger, beats of Shiva's dumru, fumes of intoxicating chillum, Shiva strength of character on Agni-Pariksha of sati, wailing warrior on his beloved death are all tracts that make this story authentic and unlock myth with a new cryptographic-historical key. However, new quasi-mythopoeic, quasi-scientific elucidations that replace the age-old interpretations of Shiva's blue throat, Sati's death by fire or Ganesha's elephant head and reference of Manu Smriti stimulate a new rubric of myths and mix well myths into new concoctions. Along with myths, these books focus on fierce issues of untouchability, women empowerment, love and caste system in a compelling narrative style. Surprisingly, in present era of demythologization and re-mythologization, Amish have surely established a fictionalized historical and geographical account of India by rendering the recreation of the traditional myths through the means of fantasy well. It's justified here to sum up in words of Mrityunjay Khurana in *The Kolkata Statesman*, "Amish has skillfully used Upanishadic, Puranic, Zoroastrian and Buddhist mythological images and their essence in lucid and contemporary language."

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## The Eternal Feminine Aspects in the *Saga* and its Relevance to the Pandemic Age

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### Abstract

*The term Eternal Feminine was coined by Goethe. It is interesting to note that the term is the synonym of Adya Shakthi, the concept which finds its origin in India. The paper analyses how the term is universal and is relevant to the Pandemic period. Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's Saga of Seven Mothers: Satisaptakam portrays the divine aspects of feminism and emphasizes the role of Nature in human life. It stresses the need for the realization of the Divine in every aspect of the universe and life. Of course, the Pandemic period projects the mortal nature of human existence. Life is a journey but it is a journey towards Death, which is inevitable and unpredictable too. Saga preaches how to extend a prudent gesture towards this exigency. Motherhood in its right perspective and Feminism in the right connotation are also under the scrutiny of this paper.*

**Keywords:** Eternal Feminine, Adya Shakthi, Pandemic, Need of Divinity.

Literature, the mirror of life abounds in instances to prove the adage, when the roots are deep, there is no reason to fear the storm. This paper focuses on the efficacy of this statement with the aid of the epic poem *Saga of Seven Mothers: Satisaptakam* by Dr. K. R. Sreenivasa Srinivasa Iyengar. The *Saga* stands a solution to several issues. Tradition vs. Modernity has been a subject of constant conflict amidst the youth of the present generation. The *Saga* answers that modernity is tradition in its right perspective. Feminism and its ideals have often been misconstrued. The *Saga* preaches feminism in its right context. Pandemic is the present tornado to prove that nothing works. The *Saga* has the remedy in the Seven Mothers. The author has chosen seven mythical women characters- seven strong women as protagonists. By re-telling the tales of the age's yore, the author answers several paradoxical quizzes. This paper, thereby ventures to analyze *Saga's* relevance to the pandemic period.

The Pandemic has created an anxiety in many that this is a precursor of the Doomsday. The physical, emotional and the financial trauma is quaking the entire globe. The tremor and its impact will last for days to come. Psychological therapy is the need of the hour. The after-effects of the Covid- combat are detrimental. More than psychological, only a spiritual solace will be a permanent healing. Faith is the formula of spiritualism as Rational thinking is the principle of Science. To survive Covid, apart from medical aid, Faith, Hope, determination, mental courage and stamina to fight alone, (as 'isolation', 'self- quarantine' are its demand) and adaptation to the new life- style in all aspects, positive thinking etc., are

essential equipments. In other words, all these are the Eternal Feminine qualities. More than the victims, the nurses and the doctors are exercising these qualities. They are the Eternal Feminine in the present scenario. Humble pranams to their feet, as they are the saviours who are exhibiting their patriotic and military zeal in the Covid situation.

The *Saga* conveys a clear-cut message how the humanity can draw power and inspiration from the mythical women whose inner strength has served them with natural wisdom, potency and all essential characteristics to combat any crisis in life 'Single-handed'. Feminism stresses individually but the mythical women without losing their 'individuality', stress and dramatize the values of harmony, humanity, humility and selflessness. The Pandemic monster is sapping all the humanness from mankind. The media recently telecasted the sad plight of an old widow mother deserted by her own children as she had been afflicted by Covid. The daughter refused to let her stay even one night, inside the compound. Only the police and the hospital were her ultimate refuge. The daughter is rational but rationally bereft of humanness is detrimental to society.

Metaphorically, the daughter symbolizes the modern man and the old mother, the mother Earth. The lack of gratitude is obvious. Myths preach the eternal value 'dharma'. Righteousness, the English term cannot wholly determine the right connotation of 'dharma'. Pandemic is a punishment. It is a curse out of Pandora's Box. The offence is lack of *dharma*. Whenever humanity indulges in exploitation, and other inhuman deeds, Nature reflects its anger in the form of such disasters and epidemics. Human fail to comprehend Nature myths narrate the tales of demons like Mahishasura, whose blood drops when fell on earth created new versions of demons. Modern rationalists and atheists queried its authenticity. Now, Pandemic produces mutated versions of corona which is a modern quandary and scientists are yet to unravel its mystery. Small pox too was contagious, deadly and demanded quarantine. People took refuge in Goddess, who has ever protected the humans and *devas* from the demonic torments. She is the Eternal Feminine. The term has its own history. Goethe has coined the term 'Eternal Feminine'. He exalts the Eternal Feminine in his *Faust II* thus:

Everything that can be perceived  
Is only a symbol;  
the imperfect which cannot be realized,  
here makes itself reality  
that which cannot be described,  
here finally completed itself  
It is the eternal feminine,  
Always attracting us to the higher. ([traditioninaction.org](http://traditioninaction.org))

The French author Chateaubriand (1768 – 1848) in his *Memories d'outre Tombe* describes the Eternal Feminine as the one who possesses beauty, charm, goodness, delicacy and affection – the qualities that are feminine.

The Tamil poet Subramania Bharathiar (1882 – 1921) has celebrated the Eternal Feminine as the Muse, the source of inspiration of all his poetry in his Tamil poem, *mangiyathor nilavinile*.



Victor Hugo (1802 – 1885), the French poet, dramatist and novelist, in his poem *La Fin de satan* has portrayed the Eternal Feminine as the celestial angel who tries to reconcile Satan to God. Eternal Feminine has the capacity to change evil to good.

Teilhard Chardin (1881 – 1955) the well known French Jesuit priest and scientist in his *L' Eternal Feminine* describes the Eternal Feminine as the envelope of God. Eternal Feminine attracts man to God and God to man. He describes it further as 'all – powerful – love'. The Tamil poets *Alvars* and *Nayanmars* have portrayed the same in *Nayagan* and *Nayaki bhava*.

Hans Eichner (1921 – 2009) in his essay, "The Eternal Feminine: An aspect of Goethe's Ethics" has described Eternal Feminine as the redeeming power of love.

In the Indian context, the Eternal Feminine is conceived as *Dasa Maha Vidyas*, the ten wisdom Goddesses. They are:

- Kali the Eternal Night
- Tara the Compassionate
- Shodashi, the sixteen year old
- Bhuvaneshwari, the creator
- Chinnamasta, the Goddess who beheads herself
- Bhairavi the frightful
- Dhumawati, the Goddess who widows herself
- Bagalmukhi, who seizes her own tongue
- Matangi, lover of Pollution
- Kamala, seated on the Lotus

These Goddesses as hierophanies have got replicated in the seven mothers. The Seven mothers in the *Saga* are Devahuti, Sukanya, Devayani, Damayanti, Draupadi, Renuka Devi and Kannagi. In the west, they are represented through the study of Sophiology, Mariology, and Great Mother etc., Sophia is the Goddess of Wisdom in Greek, as Goddess Saraswathi. Russian Mysticism considers Sophia as Mother Earth, as the Hindu cult considers Prakriti as Goddess of Nature. Wisdom is an Eternal Feminine quality. Sophia is an epitome of Beauty, Truth and Goodness and they in turn are Eternal Feminine attributes. Beauty is a symbol of Divine blessing. As John Keats said, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever", beauty is a symbol of divine bliss too. Goodness and beauty are considered as the internal and the external aspects of Beatitude.

According to Frithjof Schuon (1907 – 1998) a German metaphysician, poet and a painter, Beauty is the splendour of Truth. He echoes plato in this. In his *Esoterism as principle and as way*, he expresses thus:

Woman manifests beauty as such, so much so that there is no beauty superior to hers, when contingency has not separated her from her prototype; then one may discern in beauty as such features of femininity, of passive perfection, of virginal purity, of maternal generosity; of goodness and love (45).

Eternal Feminine is an aspect of Divinity. It is nobility compounded of beauty and virtue. It forgives, frees from bondages and unifies. In Christianity, there is “Ave gratia plena” – Angel’s statement to marry which means “full of grace”.

Schuon’s observation of feminism is vivid in his *Gnosis, Divine wisdom*

Feminism, far from being able to confer on woman ‘rights’ that are non – existent because contrary to the nature of things, can only remove from her, her specific dignity; it is the abolition of the eternal feminine, of the glory that woman derives from her celestial prototype. After all, the revolt of one sex against the other, like the cult of youth or the contempt of intelligence, is indirectly a revolt against God (54).

He assures that Beauty, Truth, Grace, Creativity, Mercy, purity, Chastity, generosity and Virginal are Eternal feminine qualities. The Great Mother, in Greek is Gaia or Gaea. In Roman Myth, she is Tellus or Terra. This concept has energized the modern ‘Gaia Theory’ which was formulated by the scientist Dr. James Lovelock as ‘Gaia Hypothesis’ in 1960. It is an ecological hypothesis which considers living and non – living parts of the earth as a complex interacting system. This is the theme of the global research today.

In Japan the Great Mother is Kuan Yin – ‘She who hears’ and ‘She who listens’. In Sanskrit Avalokitesvara means the one who hears the cries of the world. She is all compassionate. She grants the prayer for children and assists in delivery and assists in delivery. She transports the souls after their death. Some have felt and seen her in the valleys and woods, in China and Japan. Compassion and helping are the nature of Eternal feminine. Mother Mary is also Great Mother. Mary remained a virgin before and after begetting Jesus. Mother Mary is an advocate for the people of God. The Grace obtained by Christ is dispensed to humanity through Christ. Vaishnavism too has the same rule. Mother Lakshmi is the advocate for representing the need of the devotees to Lord Vishnu. *Lalita Sahasranamam* is full of the attributes of the Eternal Feminine. It describes Mother Goddess as the creator, protector and Destroyer. The attributes are Tranquility, patience, benignity, compassion, dignity, impartiality, Unconditional Love and mercy and majesty.

The Bengali poet Saint Ram Prasad (1720 – 1781) in *Mother of the Universe* sings thus:

Sometimes you appear as the peaceful helpmate  
Seated beside Shiva in quiet harmony,  
Sometimes you manifest as the radiant cosmos  
And its countless living beings  
Sometimes you play as the incomparable Radha  
Courageous lover of Lord Krishna  
Othertimes you manifest a Mother Kundalini  
The evolutionary potency  
Coiled at the root of the subtle body  
But this mad poet refuses to pay heed  
To any theology, any philosophy  
I can only weep;



Ma, Ma, Ma !

This is your sweetest name

Transcending all descriptions (13).

Simplicity is the core of her wisdom. She is a supreme warrior and in the battlefield of human suffering dissolves the demons of egocentricity at the individual and the collective level. As Goddess Mahalakshmi, she is an amalgamation of beauty, order and richness. As Mahasaraswathi, She represents accuracy, precision, perseverance, hard work, consciousness, discernment, tireless efforts, perfection to the core, diligence, order, efficiency, laboriousness, meticulousness, indefatigable will, integrity and flawlessness. Nothing is trivial for her. She is against self – deception, pretence, carelessness, negligence, indolence, laziness, dilemma, hasty careless work, clumsiness and misinterpretations.

To quote from *The Mother* again about the manifestations:

...There are emanations. An emanation of the Mother is something of her consciousness and power put from her which so long as it is in play, is held in close connection with her, and when its play is no longer required, is withdrawn back into its source, but can always be put out and brought into play once more. But also the detaining thread of connection can be served or loosened and that which came forth as an independent divine being with its own play in the world. All the Gods can put forth such emanations from their being, identical with them in essence of consciousness and power though not commensurate (62).

These emanations constitute Eternal Feminine. The seven mothers of the *Saga* are miniature representations of Eternal Feminine, the archetypes of *Shakti* in human form.

The Seven mothers have self – concept. In *The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for meaning* (1981, 1995) Fowler assures that one's self – concept is sure to influence one's personality. What you believe, that you are. Jung, the disciple of Freud is of the opinion that man wishes to remain a child. He likes to reside in the unconscious and reject everything that is strange and challenge – posing. The craving for pleasure and power is another common human trait. According to him, what stops one to evolve is, one's failure to open up to new and unfamiliar experiences which one deems as a threat to the sense of self. Protected life shuts the door of evolution. To grow, one should come out of the comfortable zone. No development of a wider and higher consciousness occurs if one refuses the exposure to learn.

The Seven Mothers even as a child and maiden accept challenges, take risk and are willing to travel the road not taken. The kind of existence they prefer enables them to dive deeper and deeper into the unsure waters of life and gain a richer perspective thereby undergoes this conflict or tension. In his book, *Childhood and Society* (1974) Erikson specifies them. They are as follows:

Basic Trust Vs Basic Mistrust

Autonomy Vs Shame and Doubt

Initiative Vs Guilt

Industry Vs Inferiority



Identity Vs Role Confusion

Intimacy Vs Isolation

Generativity Vs Stagnation

Ego Integrity Vs Despair

Hope, Will – power, Purpose, Competence, Fidelity, Love, Care and Wisdom are the basic virtues. Without them, all other values lose their spirit and relevance. The union of the opposites in the seven mothers has resulted in sublimation and a balanced personality. It is an inner process and it enables one to be self – dependent. The Chinese and Buddhist philosophies deem this conflict as “Middle Way”, “Golden mean” and “Middle pillar”. The resolution is named “Total Surrender to the Self”, “One – pointedness” and “Wholeness of the Psyche”. Jung explains thus:

In Physics, this process is called covalent bonding, where elements unite because of mutual deficiencies. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts because of a synergistic quality. This quality of ‘wholeness’ is represented in psychology as the archetype of the Self” (Nwbotanicals.org)

The wholesome personality possesses a flexible ego which works with the Self and thereby avoids wrong decisions guided by intuition. Ann Belford Ulanor, Professor of Psychiatry and Religion in her book *The Feminine in Jungian Psychology and Christian Theology* quotes Jung:

This experience of relating to the larger center of the self is felt as the sub – ordination of one’s personal wishes to a greater power and meaning. There is a religious quality to this experience that is often experienced as ‘finding one’s way’, ‘following the will of God’, ‘serving not oneself but Christ within etc., (81)

It is the process of Individuation. According to Jung man is inwardly whole. Eternally, he views life in parts. Individuation means the process of coming to know, giving expression to and harmonizing various components of the psyche. It is a transformational process of integrating the conscious with the personal and collective unconscious. Such a person can seek out remedy for others. The seven Mothers have undergone this transcendent function and thereby serve as role models as balanced personalities. When they face a crisis in life, they fight alone.

Devahuti, in marrying Kardama Prajapati, has to forego royal pleasures and comforts. She happens to adapt herself to the forest and its environ, the ascetic food of fruits and the saintly way of sleeping on the floor. Bereft of jewels and royal attires, she wears the saffron. Kardama often goes to trance. As a lonely woman, she musters her strength to feed him and protect him from falling down. She happens to spend sleepless nights to aid him in his spiritual mission. Day and night she spends her life in feeding and nursing him. She wins in her battle of enabling Kardama to attain his spiritual goal. Extra – ordinary patience, selflessness, determination, faith in her inner strength, courage, sacrifice and motherly attitude to wage a lonely battle, are her eternal feminine qualities.

Sukanya, the royal princess too is forced by circumstances to marry Chayavana, the blind and rugged looking ascetic. Like Devahuti, she faces the crisis alone. The situation is

similar in both cases. Sukanya's is worse in the sense that Chayavana is old and blind. When she prays Aswin twins, the divine doctors, they tempt her to marry them as a fee for restoring the eyesight of her husband. They also test her chastity by challenging her to identify the right Chayavana when they assume his form. Her inner force guides her to choose the right Chayavana. All the qualities of Devahuti are found in Sukanya, to prove her an aspect of the eternal feminine.

Devayani is cheated by Kacha in love. Yayati, her husband drugs her to enjoy the company of her rival Sarmishta. Devayani has the guts to redeem her from all the traumas and collects herself to lead a contented life independently. The stories of Damayanti and Draupadi, the struggles they overcome to lead a peaceful life at the end are familiar to anyone. Renuka Devi by following her instinct chooses Jamadagni as her soul – mate. But suspicion drives him to behead Renuka Devi who ultimately reveals her identity as mother Goddess. Her husband's suspicion and her own son willing to behead her show that death is imminent. She only worries about the curse that will befall on her son for murdering his own mother. She is selfless, ready to face death to prove her chastity and divinity. Kannagi's story, crisis and the eternal feminine qualities in her is well – known to people of Tamilnadu.

The conflicts and crises may differ. To face them in a right way, with the right attitude and aptitude needs a great counseling and *Saga* serves as a therapy to all ills. *Saga* is the panacea to the pandemic.

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## Migrant Experiences in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* and *In the Skin of a Lion*

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### Abstract

*This paper addresses the migrant trauma, nostalgia, dislocation and displacement in Michael Ondaatje's novels such as In the Skin of a Lion and Anil's Ghost. It also addresses how Ondaatje mingles both fact and fictitious elements while exploring migrant experiences as a diasporic writer. This Analysis is purely based on the aforementioned two novels. Textual analysis and Diaspora theory are incorporated to write this research article. Michael Ondaatje, a Sri Lankan Canadian Diasporic author has himself experienced transnational migration. That is why he is capable of explicitly expressing diasporic migration issues in his works. In Anil's Ghost, Anil who is the protagonist of the novel undergoes nostalgia, trauma and dislocation, In the Skin of a Lion emphasizes mostly migrant experiences how immigrants from different colonial countries have forcefully dragged to build the major cities of Canada like Toronto. Therefore Michael Ondaatje's works explicitly focus on migrant experiences which blend both fact and fictitious stories.*

**Keywords:** Michael Ondaatje, Diaspora, Migration, Nostalgia, Dislocation, Displacement.

### Introduction

Both the terms 'Diaspora' and 'subaltern' are related to one another because diasporic people experience migration, nostalgia, dislocation, displacement, trauma, rootlessness, and alienation as a result of separation from homeland and marginalization in the host land whereas subaltern people experience segregation because of their cultural and religious practices. After post colonialism, people tend to migrate voluntarily to fulfill their desires and economic prosperity or meet their ends. In host land diasporic migrated people are ignored in all the fields because of the western hegemonic dominance. These diasporic people who are marginalized are subalterns. Old diasporic people are surrendered to their colonial masters whereas these modern or postcolonial diasporic people oppose, question, and recreate themselves a space. Postcolonial Diasporic writers like, Michael Ondaatje has started to 'write back' in their novels to express marginalized voices of the subalterns. So novels of Ondaatje such as *Anil's Ghost* and *In the skin of a Lion* questions and express the voices of migrated and marginalized people through characters. The present paper explores migrant experiences like nostalgia, migration, dislocation, trauma, alienation, subjugation and segregation of the diasporic people and interprets the notion of the author also. The paper is



an analysis of two novels of Michael Ondaatje such as *Anil's Ghost* and *In the skin of a Lion* from the perspective of Diaspora study and textual analysis. This paper throws light on the experiences of the dislocated and dispersed people.

Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987) expresses his anxiety and sympathy towards the immigrant workers who construct Bloor Street Viaduct Bridge and a water filtration plant. History of the immigrant workers is not recorded in the archivals and history books of construction of Toronto city. Immigrants in Canada are considered as Subalterns and voiceless. The immigrants cross national boundaries of the other culture and considered as outsiders and slaves in the host land. Linda Hutcheon examines that "the outsiders, the "ex-Centrics" are made the paradoxical (and very postmodern) centre of the novel" (Hutcheon, 133).

Immigrants are Indians, Arabs, Armenians, Australians, Nigerians, New Zealanders, Macedonians, Finns, Greeks and Italian workers etc. who migrated to Canada either forced or voluntary. Cultural conflict exists due to various cultural differences in Canada. Culture of the immigrants is quite different from that of Canada. Migrants of different countries are labourers and doing filthy jobs in tanneries, slaughter houses, prisoners, as well as Clara and Alice Patrick Lewis and Commissioner Harris are also Canadians who are treated as immigrants in the novel.

This novel, *In the Skin of a lion* sets during the period close to the First World War when Europe has undergone a huge crisis. Avinash Jodha, in his book, Michael Ondaatje's fiction: Poetics of Exile points out:

Europe during this period was experiencing crisis; in the year 1913, just a year before the First World War, almost 4, 00,000 immigrants primarily from European countries came to Canada, the event coincided with the creation of new provinces in Canada the westward expansion of the country (Jodha Avinash, 80).

Patrick is a protagonist of the novel but he is not aware of civilized society. He is displaced from his native village to Toronto. "Twenty one years old Patrick dropped under the vast arches of Union station to begin his life once more" (*In the Skin of a Lion*, 53). Not only Patrick but also all immigrants from different countries have been displaced and dislocated. Glen Lorry in an article entitled "The Representation of 'Race' in Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion*" examines as

The trauma and alienation experienced by the immigrants while working for the building of Toronto city in Canada as: Overlapping the trauma of immigration with the alienation of urbanization, it refigures the expansion of Toronto, the modern industrial core of an emergent nation state, within an international flow of bodies and cultures (Lowry Glen, 64).

Patrick along with immigrant workers works to construct tunnel under lake. Dynamiting is very difficult job. Patrick's job is so harmful and dangerous. For doing such a dangerous work Patrick gains more money than other immigrant workers. Patrick, Italians, and Greeks are always silent during their eight hour shifts. So the narrator states that: Nobody else wants the claustrophobic uncertainty of this work but for Patrick this part is the only ease



in this terrible place where he feels banished from the world (*In the Skin of a Lion*, 107). The cooperation and coordination between Macedonians and Patrick is remarkable in the novel. Patrick is wholeheartedly accepted and invited to work for the water work gathering by the Macedonians. Ondaatje explains this as:

It was an illegal gathering of various nationalities and the noise of machines camouflaged their activity from whoever might have been passing along Queen Street a hundred yards away. Many languages were being spoken, and Patrick followed the crowd to the seats that were set up around a temporary stage. Patrick felt utterly alone in this laughing crowd that traded information back and forth held children on their laps (*In the Skin of a Lion*, 115).

Problems of migrants are clearly mentioned in this novel. Migrants faced lot of problems because they are not allowed to conduct or attend any public meetings and immigrants are not allowed to speak their mother tongues except imposed English language. Meanwhile laws have been imposed by native Police Chief Drapper against immigrants of foreign countries. So few of the immigrants have been arrested and jailed for their participation in several rallies in the Shapiro Drug Store clash or in High Park. The situation of the immigrants is expressed as:

He in fact pleasures in his descant interpretations of what is being said. He catches only the names of streets, the name of Police Chief Draper, who has imposed laws against the public meeting by foreigners. So if they speak this way in public, in any language other than English, they will be jailed. A rule of the city (*In the Skin of a Lion*, 133).

Immigrants experience the problem of language in host land (i.e. Canada). Because immigrants from different countries have their own mother tongues but those mother languages are not allowed to speak so immigrants tries to learn English by mimicking an actor through his career. Patrick who is living with Macedonians cannot speak mother tongue but tries to learn English which is imposed. Ondaatje has recorded immigrant's problem of learning language as:

Most immigrants learned their English from recorded songs or until the talkies came through mimicking actors on stage. It was a common habit to select one actor and follow him through his career, annoyed when he was given a small part and seeing each of his places as often as possible-sometimes as often as ten times during a run (*In the Skin of a Lion*, 47).

The sojourner's fairy tales of America has inspired Nicholas Temelcoff who is Macedonian immigrant and his treacherous travels to Canada is remarkable "But it was the spell of the language that brought Nicholas here, arriving in Canada without a passport in 1914, a great journey made in silence" (*In the Skin of a Lion*, 43). Ondaatje discloses Nicholas Temelcoff's passage to Canada who is twenty five year old when he has migrated to Canada meanwhile the First World War has begun "After his village was burned he has left with three friends on horseback" (*In the Skin of a Lion*, 45). They suffered due to fever when journeying from Switzerland to France. While journeying his two friends has died. Their boat





is dirty and covered with lice. ‘Nicholas has no passport; he cannot speak a word of English.’ at First Nicholas has started working in bakery but for Nicholas learning language of English is much difficult than working in bakery. For Him learning new language has become passion and barriers of English have never troubled him. So he has determined to learn and has started going to school but never stopped working in Bakery at night. He has spent his day life in school at age of twenty five and night life in Macedonian bakery “If he did not learn the language he would be lost” (*In the Skin of a Lion*, 46). Nicholas has dreamed of translation also and he has become crazy of learning English Language. The narrator denotes:

During this time in the Sault he had translation dreams because of his fast and obsessive studying of English. In the dreams trees changed not just their names but their looks and character. Men started answering in falsettos. Dogs spoke out fast to him as they passed him on the street (*In the Skin of a Lion*, 46-47).

Pabitra Bharali in an article “Relocating Diasporic subalterns: Carving of space and history in Michael Ondaatje’s *In the Skin of a Lion* and Amitav Ghosh’s *In an Antique Lion*” comment on identity crisis of immigrants and how they are marginalized and become voiceless and how hard they worked in the formation of urbanised and industrialised Toronto.

The various problems of immigrants manifested in their crisis of identity, crossing of cultural border, assimilation and acculturation. In the novel the author shows that the immigrants remain excluded from the very cultural spaces they have created. Wilderness creeps in the moment one is marginalised and „otherized“. The very title focuses on the transformation of identity of the immigrants who face identity crisis in the „wilderness“, i.e. in the new countries they migrate to. The displaced people – the immigrants from Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Finland coming to Canada - who worked hard to lay the foundation of modern industrialized Toronto in the 1920s suffer from unspeakable plight and have to work in the most dangerous situations (Pabitra Bharali, 760).

In the novel by Ondaatje *Anil’s Ghost* (2000), Anil’s nostalgia is clearly visible. Anil who is protagonist of the novel was born in Sri Lanka and migrates to London to study and again migrates to America to study. After fifteen years, Anil as migrant visits to Sri Lanka having England Passport as a forensic anthropologist to investigate “unknown extrajudicial executions” (*Anil’s Ghost*, 18) the crime occurred during civil war which ended in 2009 on behalf of United Nations. In her homeland Anil faces diasporic themes such as nostalgia, dislocation and trauma and displacement. Throughout her life Anil has experienced dislocation and alienation. She becomes nostalgic when she walks on the roads of Colombo and remembers that she was a swimmer once when she was a young. “So you are the swimmer!” (*Anil’s Ghost*, 16) are Sarath’s first words of greeting to her. She desires for the liberty of exile. She suffers that she is homeless, rootless, and alienated in her homeland Sri Lanka. Even though, she is not able to speak neither Tamil nor Sinhala. She loves her Sri Lanka. Since she experienced migration and studied in the west she is now a completely westernized and hybridized lady. But her memory never forgets her homeland and drags all

her past memories when she returns to Sri Lanka. Her marriage with a Sri Lankan medical student in London has become futile and that resulted in her alienation.

Horror of civil war are very harmful and Ondaatje in the novel compares that horrors of civil war are dangerous than Greek tragedies “the darkest Greek tragedies were innocent to what was happening here. Heads on stakes. Skeletons dug out of a cocoa pit in Matale” (*Anil’s Ghost*, 11).

John Bolland examines and discusses Anil’s condition that Anil is torn between her nostalgia and the freedom of exile in migration. Bolland observes on the circumstance as: The novel presents her in broken personal relationship and torn between a desire for freedom of the exile and nostalgia for her Sri Lankan childhood, whose rich texture are evoked with Ondaatje’s characteristic vividness (Bolland, 86).

Sandeep Sanghera in an article, “Touching the Language of Citizenship in Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost*” observes that when Ananda touches her back that takes into past memories of her mother or Ayah Lalita:

The touch takes her back before the language of subtleties was lost and Sri Lankan citizenship and belonging was given up...back before her settling on English as her only tongue... It is not just touch that taken Anil in to the past; it also roots simultaneously her in the present. It citizens Anil clearly to Sri Lanka she stands now (Sanghera, 90).

In England also Anil undergoes homeless, alienated and rootless. Firstly Anil during her studies in London she feels isolated. Anil's identity is fragmented and fractured since she travelled across countries she has no fixed identity. As a migrant in Sri Lanka she faces threat and trauma by the Sri Lankan Government when she finds the bodies of victims. To escape investigation and disclose the cases Sri Lankan Government forces her to leave the country by confiscating all the evidences collected by Anil Tessera. Anil also faces identity crisis and cultural clash not only in the west but also in her homeland.

Anil never feels comfortable and happy initially in her homeland, Sri Lanka which is now a migrated country. Anil is completely perplexed because of different geography and environment around her in London. She is not able to find the classroom initially in London so she misses two classes at the beginning. Ondaatje writes in the novel as:

She missed two classes in her first week, unable to find lecture room. So for a while she began arriving early each morning and waited on the front steps for doctor Endicott, following him through the swing doors, stair ways, grey- and- pink corridors, to the unmarked class room.( She once followed him, startled him and other in the men’s bathroom) (*Anil’s Ghost*, 137-138).

Anil is Ondaatje’s so daring character and she is so committed investigator that is why United Nations sends her as skilled forensic anthropologist to disclose the human rights violations have occurred during civil war in Sri Lanka. She thinks she is a native of Sri Lanka since she has the ancestral roots and no other citizen of Sri Lanka neither speak nor ask questions against the Government but Anil speaks and Ondaatje declares her not only as a foreigner but also a Sri Lankan moreover Anil identifies herself one of the natives and

victims Sarath might feel happy for Anil being the one of them. “She was no longer just a foreign authority. Then he heard her say, ‘I think you murdered hundreds of us. Sarath thought to himself. Fifteen years away and she is finally us” (*Anil’s Ghost*, 269).

When Anil migrates to England for studies, she struggles to adjust to a new culture of England. She often feels displaced, dislocated devastated and dreadful as a migrant in England. She loses her self confidence in the first month of stay in England. She sometimes becomes emotional towards her mother and motherland. In Anil's memory Sri Lanka is unforgettable country and always the best. She mentally, emotionally, physically suffers in host land. Anil's final chat with her mother in Sinhala is:

She seemed timid even to herself. She felt lost and emotional. She murmured to herself the way one of her spinster aunts did. She didn’t eat much for a week and saved enough money to phone Colombo. Her father was out and her mother was unable to phone to the phone. It was about one in the morning and she had woken her Lalita. They talked for a few minutes, until they were both weeping; it felt, at the far ends of the world (*Anil’s Ghost*, 138).

Finally Sarath is also finds dead for the Government believing that he helped Anil in providing evidences to complete the investigation. Sarath’s dead body is found in the mortuary by his brother Gamini. Voices of Gamini and other citizens are silenced. There is no chance of argument or opinion on the death of Sarath. This is neo colonialist dominance and segregation and subjugation of Subalterns “Sarath’s chest said everything. This body lay undefended, It was what it was. No longer a counter of an argument. No longer an opinion” (*Anil’s Ghost*, 289).

Even though Anil does not have any friends or relatives in touch when she comes to Colombo She was happy to be alone “Anil was glad to be alone” (*Anil’s Ghost*, 6). But Anil had known only one person Laith and Sarong which had her parents gifted her every year for Christmas. She goes to meet Lalita but their conversation dissatisfies both of them because of the language barrier. Lalita and her granddaughter can only speak Tamil which can understand little. This is how Ondaatje presents cultural conflict and Anil’s lost connection with motherland. “...and for the next while the granddaughter talked to Tamil to Lalita. Anil could understand only a few words when it was spoken relying mostly on the manner of speech to understand what they were saying” (*Anil’s Ghost*, 19).

*In the skin of a Lion* is written to depict how Canadian metropolitan cities like Toronto had been built and how urbanization has occurred in Canada. This discourse is purely based on research. Ondaatje has put a lot of effort in the library to collect sources like histories, newspapers, archival, photographs and interviews and read and write this novel *In the Skin of a Lion* which is purely a fact meanwhile recreate his own narrative techniques to create the novel, Ondaatje adds some fictitious stories. So, novel *In the Skin of a Lion* is a fusion of both fact and fictitious elements.

Likewise *Anil’s Ghost* depicts true history of civil war which occurred in Sri Lanka from 1983 to 2009. During civil war there were three groups namely Governments, anti government insurgents and separatist guerrillas. Anil has seen the bodies of victims with her

associate Sarath Diyasena who is an archaeologist who is finally gets killed by the government. Ruwana Kumara who works in mining is killed during civil war by the government. Anil who is forensic anthropologist collect all evidences and ready to find the murderers. But Governments involved in this case so she is not allowed to investigate but forces to return to America. Here to write *Anil's Ghost*, Michael Ondaatje does research and collects all the sources related to civil war and while writing this novel Ondaatje introduces fictitious characters like Anil Tessera who is a protagonist of the novel and Ananda, a sculptor and painter, Sarath Diyasena, an archaeologist, Gamini, asurgeon. Palipana, an epigraphist. So *Anil's Ghost* is a novel which is a fusion of both fact and fictitious stories. So, Ondaatje mingles both facts and fictitious stories to write his novels.

The analysis of the two novels by Michael Ondaatje along with their diasporic and textual analysis bring out that migrated people experiences dislocation, trauma, displacement, alienation and nostalgia, marginalisation, separation and segregation in the host land. Ondaatje's Novels throws light on how fact and fictitious stories have been written in novels such as *In the skin of a Lion* and *Anil's Ghost*. It is observed that selected novel, *Anil's Ghost* introduces post colonial diasporic character Anil migrated to her own native land as an forensic anthropologist in Sri Lanka to investigate the crimes during civil war but she is treated as foreigner and she for being a migrant experiences trauma, nostalgia, displacement and alienation in the homeland. It is evident that a migrant in spite of being native she is now completely westernised lady. In the novel, *In the skin of Lion*, Ondaatje explores both history and unwritten history. He tried to uncover the truth of the hard working migrants of different countries. The immigrants who are not written in official history of Canada are real hard workers in the construction of Toronto. They are ignored in history and become marginalised and subjugated. The migrant people become diasporic subalterns. But Ondaatje as a postcolonial diasporic author 'writes back' and discovers the truth through novel. It is also observed how language of migrant people create cultural crisis. Identity crisis is also visible in these two novels of Ondaatje. Michael Ondaatje has himself experienced migration and as a diasporic writer he has expressed migrant experiences in the two texts meticulously.

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## Marital Entropy in Amulya Malladi's *The Copenhagen Affair*

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### Abstract

*Marriage is considered entropy by some married couples in their marital relationship. Entropy, the second law of thermodynamics is a quantitative measure of disorder in a system either remain constant or increase. Duncan says entropy is caused by inattention to a marriage that needs constant attention. This paper delineates the entropy in marital relationships where the disorder increases day by day. Sanya is a middle-aged woman whose two decades of marital life is an entropy system, which makes her undergo a nervous breakdown in her forties. To overcome her nervous breakdown Sanya catches in the hands of Copenhagen's cafe class and corporate lifestyle. Amulya Malladi as a marketing executive for fourteen years assimilates her personal experience of the Copenhagen lifestyle through Sanya.*

**Keywords:** Entropy, Marriage, Nervous breakdown, Psychological disorder, Identity.

### Introduction

Marriage is a legal union between man and woman. Marital Entropy is the principle that if a marriage does not receive preventative maintenance and upgrades it will move towards decay and breakdown. Couples realize that marriage is not a state of constant which requires much effort to maintain stability to nurture. Marriage is relationship entropy (disorder) increased in a closed system. In order to make something good, you need to give your efforts constantly. Marriage is absolute entropy where you have to pay constant efforts to run a relationship better; preferentially disaster will worsen your marital relationship. In the past, there was tolerance among the couples. Today we make much effort to respect others in our family, classroom, workplace and society, but fail to respect our partner which will taint relationship. To lead a better life every one of us makes effort to respect each other in the relationship.

Amulya Malladi is an Indian diasporic writer of eight novels and her books have been translated into many languages like Danish, Dutch, French, Spanish, German, Serbian and others. She has fifteen years of experience as marketing executive hence all her novels have career women as protagonists. Her novels are *A Breath of Fresh Air* (2002), *The Mango Season* (2003), *Serving Crazy with Curry* (2004), *Song of the Cuckoo Bird* (2005), *The Sound*



of Language (2007), *A House for Happy Mothers* (2016), *The Copenhagen Affair* (2017) and *The Nearest Exit May Be Behind You* (2019). She was born in 1974 in Madhya Pradesh, India. She got her bachelor's degree in electronics engineering and master's degree in journalism. Then she worked in Silicon Valley, US. She moved to Denmark and lived there for more than a decade along with her husband and children. Now she lives in US.

Amulya Malladi acknowledges *The Copenhagen Affair* (2017) as a love letter to Copenhagen where she lived more than a decade. After moving to US, she missed the Copenhagen, the city, food, ambience, outdoor cafe culture and friends. She has described various restaurants, cafes, museums and the bars throughout the novel. Sanya, the protagonist of the novel is a successful woman in her career, perfect wife and a lovely mother. But everything is collapsed when she doesn't get the position she deserves in the company where she is working for fifteen years. Sanya has been a victim of relationship entropy for two decades since her marriage with Harry which is deteriorating year after year.

### **Marital Entropy in *The Copenhagen Affair***

*The Copenhagen Affair* is a novel about a couple Sanya and Harry, who have been married for two decades and on the wife's emotional instability, materialistic people and the colorful Copenhagen life style which could either save or ruin the marriage. As all Malladi's novels have career woman as its heroine, Sanya is an Indian American woman, who is working in a company for fifteen years at first as a consultant and then becomes a manager of strategy through her sincerity and hard work. But her company fails to recognize her when her juniors become the partners of the company. As an introvert Sanya never reveals her emotions to anyone. But time reveals, when her company calls Sanya and informs that she is not going to be a partner of the company she bursts out into tears at the first time and says:

I got angry, that was my first reaction. I was angry. How could they? I mean, it took them fifteen years? Brian made a partner six years ago, and he started three years after me. And Santosh became partner last year, and I had four years' seniority over him. So, I was angry, really angry. (229)

Harry's lack of attention and love towards her is one of the foremost reasons for her nervous breakdown. She feels dejected and helpless when the company throws her out, then she calls her husband Harry. But he fails to answer her call and reaches her office lately. On reaching the office, he sees Sanya crying but he doesn't ask her anything instead he asks everyone in the office and asks Miguel whether she was raped? That is the moment when Sanya's marital relationship becomes fragile. Then Sanya shuts herself alone in duvet and stops to speak to anybody. She chooses sleep as drug to avoid people, emotions and Harry who he never tries to understand which is disturbing Sanya.

Harry's irresponsible attitude and carelessness hinder Sanya from recovering the break down. Sanya learned the word thermodynamics from her friend Alec, who was a physicist at Stanford. "The second law of thermodynamics states that entropy is the quantitative measure of disorder in a system. In any closed system, the entropy of the system will remain either constant or increase. If marriage is considered a closed system, then the physics of it starts to make sense. Entropy or disorder increases in a marriage - day after week



after month after year” (03). Sanya knows that Alec is mentioning her marital life as entropy. Among all friends of Sanya, Alec hates Harry and rebukes him for treating his wife crudely though everyone adores him as a handsome and successful man. But Harry never jealous on Alec because he thinks Alec is the perfect man for his wife’s friend, who is single, bald and not good looking. Alec hatred towards Harry is because, he never treats his wife as equal, and always treats her as his home secretary who looks after him and his daughter Sara. Though she is also a working woman, she has to help him to get suits and suit bag.

Harry thinks that changing geographies will be the best remedy for Sanya’s emotional baggage. After four months of her break down he asks her to move to Copenhagen for a year, but not out of his love for Sanya. That was totally a business trip to Copenhagen where he will buy a company. She reluctantly reveals her hesitation that she knows nothing about Copenhagen. But Harry insists her to come along with him as he doesn’t want to spoil his best opportunity. To move or not to move was a question in Sanya’s brain.

Harry and Sanya move to Copenhagen in May and the weather is drastically different from sunny, blue sky of California which is so matched to Sanya’s mood like windy, rainy and gray. He hopes this change will help her to recover from the breakdown. She gets out of the bed and watches television which makes him happy, but he never spends his time with her. He is as busy as Anita Desai’s Gautama in *Cry the Peacock*. Like Gautama, he too doesn’t have time to look after his wife. Gautama is always found busy with his papers and clients and doesn’t find time to spend for his wife Maya which leads her to mental illness.

Harry had been fascinated on her when he first met her. He praised her that she was his Indian princess. In the beginning he was doing some second and third job. His business had thrived when she supported him by taking responsibility of family and Sara. After that Sanya went unnoticed to him. It is narrated in the text as: “His passion for Sanya had been that mad-for-you and can’t-live-without-you kind... Where did it go? Because now, twenty years later, the passion was tenuous” (07). When she hides herself in the duvet, he calls to wake her up from the bed. But Sanya doesn’t respond to his words. He had looked at her disgust and she feel helpless. His insensitivity makes her to cry which disturbs him but he left the place with his hasty good bye. Sanya couldn’t control her tears. She feels: “... when things didn’t work in his way: he pretended everything was normal because he didn’t know how to handle the abnormal situation...” (17)

Harry proves himself a good businessman but fails to be a good husband. Introvert Sanya never expresses or complains anything. He went for three days business trip even after knowing that she is abnormal and there is none to take care of her in Copenhagen. He didn’t call her for three days as he never calls her during his business trip. He received a call from Sanya’s mother who said Sanya once attended her phone and mumble something now she won’t pick up the phone. “I’m in Houston, what do you want me to do now?” Harry had snapped. Get her help, Naina yelled at him. She’s your wife. So pull up your pants and be a man”. (20) Everyone was worried in the family, Sanya’s parents, her sister and brother-in-law. With the pressure he gets from them, he called Alec without any choice, even though she doesn’t like him. “Alec was the intellectual, and Harry was the corporate whore” (21)



One of the best things needed in any relationship is acceptance. Harry fails to accept Sanya's worst days. The routines of marriage life may end in break down. In order to have a healthy relationship each of the couple have to spend some time. Harry got a text message from Alec stating that "She's unwashed, starved, and sick. Looks like shit. Managed to get her into the shower. Get your ass back home. Taking her to the therapist" (21). When Harry came home, he found Sanya sleeping in the couch, Alec is sitting next to her. He thanked Alec for his help and Alec said, "And you need to stay at home and not wander of business trips. I have a job, Harry said defensively" (21). Harry was afraid to be with Sanya, who has swollen eyes and she was not the happy woman she had married. Alec rebukes Harry "be with her for the first time in your marriage. She needs someone to be with her" (22). This clearly shows that Harry never spends his time with her after their marriage.

In high society where white-collar crimes and marital secrets and techniques are more common. Even though Sanya is tempted to pass the ethical boundaries, she balances herself. She faces emotional indiscretions and her husband's infidelity tempts her to attempt a new affair with Ravn in a new ambience. Harry had three affairs of their two decades of marriage. The readers can feel various cracks in the marital life of Harry and Sanya and that paves a way for the new version of Sanya.

Copenhagen transforms Sanya and She is gently caught up with the life style of Copenhagen and starts to go out. Harry compels her presence in the dinner where Sanya meets Anders Ravn, who is the owner of the IT company which Harry is going to purchase and both were attracted towards each other in the first meeting. Ravn is attracted towards Sanya by her Indian blonde beauty and looks the way which Harry fails for so many years. She also could feel the chemistry between them, but her mind is questioning her either to accept or deny: "what to do with how she felt ... she was in love with Ravn - the wild and irresponsible, head-over-heels kind of love. Or was this something else? Lust? Attraction? What did it mean to be in love anyway? (179). And then Sanya's mind is struck with the fact that she has an eighteen-year-old daughter and a part of Indianness is always carried out by her with her morality.

"One damaged person was asking the other damaged person to show her his wounds so that they both would feel less alone" (125). Ravn shares his thought on love and break down to Sanya. He said, "When you're depressed you love no one, not even yourself (109). He shares how he suffered in his old days when his parent left him and how he overcome all the breakdowns. While discussing they felt that they could heal their breakdowns. Sanya was attracted by him because he is also a damaged person like her and his survival is similar to hers.

Infidelity is unfaithfulness in a relationship. It affects the individual's emotional health rather than physical health. Sanya's life absolutely changed when she finds her husband's infidelity with his colleague. Tara Hansen, thirty-five years old brilliant woman is a legal counsellor of Harry's business. They had a sexual relationship when they go for business trips. When he looks the messages from Ravn to Sanya, Harry feels insecure and asks her whether she cheats on him. In response Sanya asks him whether he has been

cheating her or not? But Harry didn't answer her. She is not sure about his infidelity with Tara, but she suspects him and reveals this in her therapist session.

The significance of loyalty in marriage is insisted by Malladi through the marital relationship of Harry and Sanya. Sanya takes perfect care of both Sara and thus Harry is left with so much time to flirt around other women. He realizes that he has failed his fatherly duty as well as a husband's responsibility. Harry realises that Sanya decides to walk away from him and shows the signs of her emotional detachment from Harry.

Marriage is a unique relationship which deserves an extra loyalty, commitment and responsibilities. Harry lacks in all the things and he is not ready to change his lifestyle after marriage. When Ravn takes Sanya to island in a boat he tells her that Ravan in the *Ramayana* who is asura and bad guy kidnaps Sita and falls in love with her. Sanya questions, "And does she fell in love with him?" Ravn replies "No, she is pious and makes a circle of honour around her so Ravan can't touch her" (273). Malladi beautifully compares Sanya with the pure and pious Sita and Ravn to Ravan.

Distractions help the humans after an implosion. From time-to-time distractions divert you from solving your existence and you can get out of your scenario. In Sanya's case Ravn helped her to clear the gray. Love between Ravn and Sanya was so genuine even though she sees him as distraction to come out of her despair. And also, when he knows that she was the one who gave all his information to the reporter, he treats hers with true care and never shouts on her instead he says, "I'm hurt that you didn't love me enough to protect me. But I'm not angry. I brough this upon myself... love is recognizing yourself in another" (277).

Harry returns to Sanya and takes the duty of taking care of his wife with his hugs and promises. He passionately loves her and said to Lucky, "I'll never leave Sanya... and she makes me happy... even like this, being with her is better than being without her" (71). Even though Sanya has the heart to forgive Harry, when Harry approaches that they can reunite and live together, she responds that they can stay aside without getting a divorce. Because Sanya suffers the extreme pain and melancholy thus she needs time to fix again the damaged pieces of her marriage. At the end of the novel, Sanya tells Harry, "If we want to save this marriage and me, I need to figure out who I am and you need to figure out who this New Harry is" (285).

## Conclusion

Julie Lawson Timmer says Amulya Malladi brings Denmark's capitol into brilliant color, a wife's precarious emotional stability and the international business deal that could either save or ruin everything. *The Copenhagen Affair* reminds us that we must each decide what we are willing to risk to build our fortunes and find our true happiness. The biggest problem with marriages is we fall into the habits of that one person compromises all the indifferences and on the other hand the other becomes used to do it and the one who compromises progressively unhappy with the compromises. If you can't restore, it all will boom one day. Harry cannot withstand when Sanya ready to walk away from him and become an extrovert. He is changing himself and tries to rescue her immediately. Marital life is not a Utopia to everyone. It needs extra care, attention, responsibility and love.



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## Analyzing the Atrocities on the Marginalized Dalit Women: A Study of Caste-Gender Interplay in Dalit Women's Autobiographies

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### Abstract

*Dalit women constitute the most unfortunate and deprived segment in Indian society, collectively suffering from the multitudes of discrimination, marginalization and atrocities in their quotidian existence. They are subjected to brutal violence in myriad forms, such as rape, gang rape, sexual assault and physical abuse, with the persistence of caste hierarchies playing a pivotal role in perpetuating such heinous crimes against humanity. Dalit women face multiple vulnerabilities on account of their caste positions and gender identity, apart from their vulnerability in the material relations of society both within and outside their communities. The paper examines such graded forms of violence committed on Dalit women, and the factors behind the perpetrators enjoying cultural impunity in society. As Dalit women are seen as ritually impure and dirty beings, they are denied equality, freedom and self-respect, thus making them prey to the Brahmanical nature of caste oppression and gender violence in a society that practices the notion of purity and pollution in everyday realities, thus effectively undermining the autonomy and sexual freedom of Dalit women. The sexual subordination of Dalit women constitutes the core agenda of caste hegemony and patriarchal manipulation, as the caste hierarchies reinforce gender inequalities and perpetuate social fragmentation along the caste lines. The paper tries to locate and analyze the motives behind such atrocities committed against Dalit women as narrated in Dalit autobiographies extensively, and how such artistic endeavours attempt to sensitize citizens so that such heinous forms of violence can be prevented against women in general and Dalit women in particular.*

**Keywords:** Atrocities, Caste, Dalit, Gender, Marginalization, Violence, Patriarchy.

### Introduction

The rise of Dalit women's autobiographies breaks a new ground in countering the elitist views of women's writings dominated by upper caste women authors and exposes the dark underbelly of Hindu society that strictly regulates the caste segregation and gender-based regulations on the daily basis. In the Shastric interpretations, Dalit women are considered the carriers of "polluted bodies" as they have been denied a ritually pure status in the Hindu Shastras, thus relegating them to the status of permanent pollution in Hindu society. They are considered to be contemptible and highly polluting, therefore forcing the upper caste groups to maintain a distance from them as their touch is defiling in nature and





can pollute the sacred status of the upper castes. They foreground their “polluted bodies” to draw our attention to the regressive and oppressive mentality of society towards the collective predicament of Dalit women and questions the male-centric viewpoints of Dalit men authors as they are seen deliberately ignoring the specific needs and difficulties of Dalit women. They bring to the public the culture of oppression and violence against women as normalized in the Hindu society and its repressive cultural traditions. Such autobiographical narratives are not only acts of testifying to the myriad ways in which Dalit women are oppressed and subjugated, but also reflect the collective resistance against gender and caste-based violence as experienced by the women belonging to the marginalized social backgrounds. It attacks the “exclusive nature of Dalit men’s autobiographies and critiques the communitarian view on Dalit women and their collective predicament.

As the representative of collective struggle of Dalit women, such personal narratives are truthful expression of socio-cultural marginalization and otherisation as experienced by the Dalit women in the normative social universe of the Hindu society. Such personal narratives discard the glorifying tendencies of “bourgeois individualism” and highlight the harsh realities of Dalit women spent in the caste-segmented Hindu society. It is a metaphorical act of speaking for oneself and a way of expression the grudge and dissatisfaction against a society which has been unkind and adverse to the collective emancipation of Dalit women. Gopal Guru has stressed on the need for Dalit women’s talk differently as their sociological backgrounds produces an altogether view of reality which has been hardly portrayed by the savarna female writers and Dalit male writers in their personal memories.

In the normative Hindu society, Dalit women are positioned at the lowest rung of Hindu society. As their bodies represent the polluted status, they are deprived of love, empathy and social respectability due to their supposed ritual impurity. In the elaborate texts of Hindu shastras, women are given the lowest positions along the shudras, as they are ritually impure beings and do not enjoy the social acceptance. As Dalit women are “doubly oppressed” due to their caste and gender positions, they face a multifaceted oppression and subordination in society from different quarters. They foreground the women-specific issues to the fore as absent in Dalit men’s autobiographies and express a candid view on the protection of female sexuality and bodily exploitation by the upper caste men. They reject all patriarchal notions that portray women negatively and highlight the sexist gaze they face in their everyday living in a caste- divided society. It critiques the male dominance in Hindu society and ridicules the caste-ascribed roles as enforced on Dalit women due to their caste and gender positions in Hindu society. The negative image of Dalit women and their polluted bodies as ascribed by the custodians of caste and gender supremacy has been turned upside down in order to underline the bodily exploitation of Dalit women as sites of resistance for sociological transformation. They don’t talk like “victims” of caste oppression and gender injustice, but assumes a pivotal role as the agents of social transformation, bringing an end to the gender violence and caste-based inequalities.



Violence or atrocities on Dalit women is a recurring phenomenon in Indian society and the role of shastric interpretation in denying equality, justice and agency should be understood through the elaborate system of purity and pollution. In addition, all atrocities against Dalit women are instigated by the “caste animosity” and hence it would not be erroneous if one call gender atrocities on Dalit women as the manifestation of “caste violence.” The very social location of Dalit women at the lowest rung of society and attaching the tag of “untouchable” to their identities makes them perfect prey for such caste-based violence that assumes gender specific attributes later on. The observation of Guru (1995) needs to be contextualized here in order to properly understand the nuanced aspects of atrocities or violence of any kind perpetrated on Dalit women and their female sexuality. He argued that the question of heinous atrocities committed by the upper caste men on Dalit women “cannot be grasped merely in terms of class, criminality, or as a psychological aberration or an illustration of male violence. The caste factor also has to be taken into account which makes sexual violence against dalit or tribal women much more severe in terms of intensity and magnitude” (Guru, 2548).

The perpetration of violence on Dalit women’s bodies can be seen as the manifestation of the persistence of caste hierarchies and patriarchal domination that work in tandem and incessantly to subordinate Dalit women in society, thus denying them a legitimate dignified space in the normative imagination of Hindu society. They are still tormented inside and outside their families, as they are still considered to be “untouchable” in the eyes of the upper caste groups. It is their caste and gender location that makes them vulnerable to material exploitation, sexual violence and physical abuse. Dalit women are seen to be subservient to the diktats of patriarchal forces which try to ensure male dominance in society and subordination of the female sexuality, thus denying women agency, equality and emancipatory identity. The excessive use of violence on the female sexuality of Dalit women can also be described as a tool of maintaining caste privilege and ensuring the gender subordination of the marginalized women in a patriarchal society that disallows any equal treatment to women due to the persistence of ritual impurity attached to their polluted bodies.

Dalit women occupy the most vulnerable positions in society and suffer from economic disability, due to the lack of material independence. They have to render physical labors along with their husbands on the farmlands of the upper caste groups in order to sustain their daily living. The upper castes treat them as “untouchables” and hardly give them any respect for rendering the physical labor at the exchange of meager wages. Like their husbands, they too spend their quotidian living working as the low-paid agricultural jobs or other forms of works which are hardly given any dignified place in society. The hazardous nature of jobs not only affects their health, but also hardly ensures the requirement of minimal income for running a family. In the most cases, Dalit women are seen as the sole earning members of their family, whereas their husbands squandering away their lives in gambling and drinking.

Poverty is the dominant image in the lives of Dalit communities, with women of the said community facing the brunt of such disability the most due to their social and gender

locations. They are subjected to the graded forms of oppression and violence within and outside their families. The pervasive nature of graded patriarchies affects their well-being to a great extent. They suffer from torture and physical abuse in the hands of their husbands, which testify the existence of Dalit patriarchal structures. Not only that, they face violent oppression in the hands of the upper caste men who treat the former as their properties and are subjected to their whims. Their material vulnerability becomes the opportunities for the upper caste men for perpetrating sexual and physical violence against women belonging to the marginalized groups, as they use their socially dominant positions in order to demonstrate their caste-based and patriarchal domination on the hapless women. Many Dalit women's autobiographies such as Bama's *Sangati* (2005) have shown how the Dalit women are subjected to sexual exploitation by the upper caste men in which the latter use their ownership of landed properties as a tool to perpetrate atrocities against Dalit women. As the marginalized Dalit women are uneducated and suffer from material deprivation, they can't resist such lewd advances due to their precarious position in the material relations of Hindu society.

Women from the marginalized social background experience the vicious cycle of "triple oppression" due to their caste, class and gender locations within and outside their families. All of Dalit women have a similarity in their lived experiences of sexual or physical assault in the hands of the upper caste men, as they utilize their poor economic condition to launch brutal forms of physical abuse and sexual violence at the daily basis. As they face consistent threats from the upper caste employers, Dalit women frequently change their occupations or jobs in order to protect their self-respect and honor. In the majority cases, the complaints made by Dalit women against the upper caste men are not even heard. Instead, Dalit women are accused of maligning the good image of the men of dominant castes. Bama demonstrated in *Sangati* (2005) how the myriad ways in which the upper caste men sexually exploit the marginalized women working on their fields as the agricultural laborers. Even the village council displays its parochial patriarchal mentality, when it punishes the innocent Dalit women arbitrarily to establish casteist and patriarchal hegemony over the female sexuality. Due to the material depravity, Dalit women always face sexual threats from the upper caste men as the latter use every possible opportunity to sexually exploit women belonging to the marginalized social backgrounds. Bama showed how the upper caste men used mere "excuse for squeezing" the breasts of a Dalit girl (Bama, 26). Dalit women are relegated to the mere properties of men and the sole objects of fulfilling the sexual urges of men. Such diminution of Dalit women's body reflects the extent of patriarchal oppression and subjugation that they are subjected to in their quotidian living. Bama expressed with sadness: "A woman's body, mind, feelings, words and deeds, and her entire life are all under his control and domination" (Bama, 68).

Dalit women also face the frequent cases of domestic violence within their families in the hands of their husbands and in-laws. They are hardly given any dignified space and freedom within their family and are considered as the mere tool of fulfilling domestic obligations and sexual satisfaction of their husbands. None displays any sympathy for their



suffering condition, as they are hardly considered as the fellow human beings. The commoditization of Dalit women is a dominant norm in Indian society, thus denying them equality, freedom and self-respect in their quotidian existence, which leads to the violations of their human rights in a caste-ascribed and patriarchal society that remains insensitive to the collective predicament of Dalit women. Dalit women face the myriad forms of oppression from their parents, husbands and in-laws, who acted “as tyrants by curbing their freedom and punishing them for small misdeeds” (Kumar, 225). Even Dalit women are brutally tortured by their own husbands in families as they never respect them and use them as mere toys of fulfilling their sexual needs. Instead of lending a supporting hand to their wives, Dalit husbands torture their wives and sexually exploit them in a heinous manner, thus testifying the prevalence of the practice of “Dalit patriarchy” in Indian society. Thomas said: “In this context, the family turns out to be another means of extending patriarchal and social control over the woman. Since the Dalit man has access to the public, he is entitled to exercise power and control over the Dalit woman, and it is he who determines her place in society- that is, relegates her to the private sphere of her home” (Thomas, 243). It busted the myth that Dalit communities don’t practice patriarchy and they are “egalitarian” in their normative existence. Gopal Guru said: “the moral code imposed by Dalit patriarchy forced Dalit women into private spheres and denied them public visibility” (Guru, 1995: 57).

While Dalit men enjoy accessibility to the public spaces, Dalit women are condemned to the private spheres encircled by the four walls of domesticity. While women are kept within the houses, Dalit men enjoy greater freedom and enjoy spatial mobility. Whenever Dalit women transcend their gender-ascribed roles, they are punished for morally subversive acts, such as choosing sexual partners on their own. Chakravarti (2018:65) highlighted how “consent” of women is obtained through the powerful ideology of “Pavitrata” and “stridhrama” in the patriarchal Hindu society to ensure the seamless operation of patriarchal notions in society, which aim at coercing women into patriarchal domination and denying them a space for self-respect, equality and social emancipation. The control over the female sexuality is the ultimate objective of any patriarchal society and this leads to the unquestioned dominance of men over women in society. Chakravarti showed how a need has been felt to organize and order the female sexuality and the innate natures of women by “paternal power” in the emerging societies “to serve the new social and political arrangements organized by men of the dominant sections of society” (Chakravarti, 69).

Everyday humiliation, denial and discrimination are the privileges of Dalit women and their married lives have been “harsh and arduous”, as they face multitudes of physical and sexual exploitation in the family of their husbands. Instead of welcoming them with love and empathy, Dalit women are consistently tortured and abused in myriad ways for their socio-economic vulnerabilities. Since they are married off at a very early age, they hardly finish their school education, thus continuing their ignorant life. Marriage means “calamity” for these young Dalit girls, as they venture into the predestined life of suffering, humiliation and marginalization. Kamble showed how the complexity of patriarchal structures in society proved to be very destructive for Dalit girls, as they “had to endure the abuses everyday in the

household.... This rigorous punishment at a young age, however, was far preferable to what she had to endure once she reached maturity” (Kamble, 95). Kamble in her autobiography *The Prisons We Broke* (2008) recounted her painful days as she married too early and was forced to abandon a life of freedom and happiness to fulfill the domestic obligation and to satisfy the sexual needs of her husband. She was the victim of caste discrimination and gender injustice, as she had followed the instructions of her husbands’ all the time, thus losing her autonomy and agency. She showed how as a woman she faced derogatory remarks from her husband questioning about her ability at the daily basis. To escape the patriarchal wrath of her husband, she was forced to hide her personal diary from her husband. Her husband was very patriarchal in outlook and “considered a woman to be an inferior being” (Kamble 147).

Like the upper castes, Dalits too express the preference for male children in families and express a disdainful approach to girl children which results in the proper upbringing and timely education of girl children being seriously affected. As Dalits suffer from illiteracy and class inequality, they get their girl children married at the very early age even before reaching the stage of puberty. They are forced to fulfill all the family obligations and are asked to strictly remain loyal to the parents’ or husbands’ families. The gender restrictions are everywhere in the daily living of Dalit women. Even they become mothers at the very age and are forced to resume their daily physical labors within weeks after their delivery, thus putting themselves at the greater health-related risks. But, it is a common phenomenon and can be seen in every Dalit household across the country. It is a reflection of the patriarchal mentality and sex-based division of laborers to the disadvantages of the Dalit women.

Bama’s *Karkku* (2012) is an important Dalit woman’s autobiography, which chronicles the collective trajectory of Dalit Christian community and how Dalit women in particular face all forms of oppression and violence in their daily living. It shows the disillusionment of Dalit Christians who considered that conversion to Christianity will usher in a ray of hope and emancipation for the ex-untouchables who used to be subjected to brutal forms of caste and gender oppression and violence in the Hindu society. Her autobiography becomes the autobiography of the entire community. Her hope for emancipation in Christianity proved to be a disillusion as she continued to face discrimination and humiliation in the Roman Catholic Church due to her caste location. This bears testimony to the fact that mere conversion to other religion fails to ensure equality and self-respect for Dalits as the caste prejudices in the religious folds continue to survive in this country. The caste identity of the individual becomes his/her predestined fate and a source of social acceptance or rejection.

Dalit women writers such as Baby Kamble, Bama, Sivakami, and Urmila Pawar had made a sustained attack on the Brahmanical Hinduism for the wretched conditions of Dalits in general and Dalit women in particular. They revisit such religious texts of Hinduism and expose the hidden justification of caste and gender based violence and subordination. They foreground a Phule-Ambedkarti perspective to analyze the sorry state of Dalits and try to unfold how the systematic discrimination and atrocities on Dalit women have been





normalized under the caste system which promotes the patriarchal hegemony to keep women under the permanent subservience to their counterparts. In this respect, the guiding principle of purity and pollution has been legitimized by the Brahminical Hindu texts in order to regularize or justify the sordid and suffering condition of Dalit women in Hindu society. The application of ritual impurity or pollution to women and lower caste groups is seen another effective ploy to perpetuate the caste hegemony of the dominant castes and regulate the female sexuality to suit the patriarchal agenda. They also critique the ignorance of Dalits and their unflinching devotion to the Hindu rituals which are both oppressive and exploitative in nature. The acute paucity of “education” is seen behind the persistence of such dead cultural practices despite the fact that such dead customs or rituals hardly alleviate Dalit women as they reject equality, self-respect and collective emancipation of Dalit women.

The unflinching love for education is another important dominant theme in every Dalit women’s autobiographies as they consider that it is the lack of knowledge which is responsible for such wretched condition for Dalit communities. And they consider that education is the only route to the collective emancipation of Dalits which not only ensures self-respect for Dalits but also provides them with ample opportunities for socio-economic mobility. In other words, education serves as the only way for achieving “an egalitarian society” as envisioned by Phule and Ambedkar in their anti-caste polemic writings. It infuses Dalit women with the empowering spirit of self-confidence and makes them mentally strong enough to wage a fight against any kind of social and gender-linked oppression and discrimination.

Kumud Pawde’s autobiographical extract, *The Story of My Sanskrit* included in *Antasphot* narrates how the author had been denied the opportunities to learn Sanskrit in her college as Sanskrit was considered to be the exclusive privilege of Brahmins. Pawde recounted the humiliation she faced during her interview due to her caste location: “So now even these people are to teach Sanskrit! Government Brahmins, aren’t they?” (Pawde, 105) Despite the numerous odds, she fought against such social discrimination and became a professor in that language. Here, education is seen as a tool of realizing freedom and achieving social mobility. Instead of being bogged down by the upper caste hegemony over the language of Sanskrit, Pawde continued learning Sanskrit, thus breaking the social monopoly of the upper castes, which resulted in democratizing the field of knowledge production. This personal memoir bears testimony to the fact that Dalit women are the least fortunate segment in Indian society and suffers from multiple forms of oppression and discrimination due to their social location and gender positions, yet they never give up hope for a better future. The normative Indian society effectively restricts the freedom and socio-spatial mobility of Dalit women, as they continue to face the social repulsion due to the persistence of caste-based prejudices and patriarchal mentality.

With the expansion of neo-liberal order and the rise in educational qualifications of Dalits, the orthodox, the repressive structures of village economy have been collapsing gradually. Educated Dalit women no more dependent on the mercy of the upper castes for survival, as they are moving out of the villages and are migrating to the urban areas to secure



the semi-skilled or skilled jobs in different sectors, thus gaining economic independence and spatial mobility, which eroded the hegemonic hold of the dominant castes over the collective lives of Dalit women. This created a solid “resentment” and a fear of losing the caste-linked privileges such as the material dominance in the rural economy by the upper castes. The effects of modernity have been felt in Dalit women too and as a result, they are coming out of their “imposed captivities” to assert their rights in the different socio-symbolic levels. It led to the intensification of the animosity that the upper castes have for Dalits.

They couldn’t tolerate such independent living of Dalits and their achieving socio-economic mobility. The relative progress made thanks to the reservation policies, educated Dalit women are getting educated and joining in different professions in different sectors, thus gathering power and prestige in society. The noticeable changes have been detected in the ways of living, dress-codes and attitudinal attributes of the marginalized Dalit women, who don’t shy away from making their voices heard. Dalit women’s autobiographies indicate the emergence of a new kind of Dalit women who refuse to be depicted as the mere “victims” of caste and gender based atrocities in the caste –segregated society and want to act as the agents of social transformation, thus leading their living on their own choice. This altered the status quo of the traditional village economy and power relations and infuriated non-Dalits to a great extent. As a result, there has been intensification of such violent atrocities on Dalit women in particular, with the upper caste men are increasingly becoming the perpetrators of such cruel forms of atrocities. The violation of Dalit women’s bodily modesty and sexuality by the upper caste men can be interpreted as a lesson for the entire Dalit community. The culture of impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of caste-linked atrocities committed on the marginalized women reflects the direct patronage of society which reproduces caste hierarchies and regulates gender relations in everyday social living.

### **Conclusion**

Dalit women face brutal forms of atrocities on the everyday basis, with the regressive caste ideology and patriarchy playing an important role in their sustenance. The very foundation of Hindu society is based on the caste-based separation and gender discrimination, with the culture of violence against women being normalized in the religious texts of Hindus, as Dalit women inherit the status of “permanent ritual impurity” according to Hindu religious texts. But, with the passage of time, Dalit women have become vocal about their human rights and are becoming increasingly assertive in their constitutional rights, thus creating a resentment of the upper castes against Dalit in general and Dalit women in particular. The very location of Dalit women at the intersecting point of caste, class and gender has exacerbated their socio-economic vulnerabilities, which led to the further occurrence of atrocities on Dalit women. Dalit women’s autobiographies testify to the caste-gender linkage to such violent acts committed against Dalit women and expose the overall regressive mentality of society against women. Putting an end to such cycles of caste-cum-gender violence would not be an easy feat, yet the marginalized women can change such deplorable condition, if they get educated more and more, and forge solidarities with other oppressed

segments of society to fight a collective battle for gender equality and emancipation for all women.

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## The Study of Themes, Ways and Motivations of Women Empowerment in Dalit Feminism

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### Abstract

*Dalit women liberation is a women's activist visual perspective that subsumes questions station and sexual orientation jobs among the Dalit populace and inside women's liberation and the greater women's turn of events. Dalit women face different challenges than women in higher castes in South Asian countries. Dalit feminists advocate for equal rights for Dalit women based on gender, caste and other issues. The current status of women has started protesting against the discrimination and injustices even upon them and are trying to create a female space for themselves. In India caste system legitimizes gender inequality and untouchability. Even though their life is very hard, the women have a life outside their homes, unlike upper-caste, middle-class women who remain inside their homes at all times. We should educate boys and girls alike, showing no difference between them as they grow into adults. The injustices, violence, and inequalities will come to an end, by proving that 'Women can make and women can break'. Dalit women have been functioning throughout past times, even though frequently this has not been reported. At Present, they are the fastness of the Dalit movements in thousands of Indian rural areas. They proceed to a plan of action for a censorious character in the movements for women's rights. However, they are unable to put an end to structural discrimination and exclusion. Violence and impunity are used to keep them in their place. In India, the term 'subaltern' is generally used synonymously with the term 'Dalit', especially focusing their attention on the oppressive structures of caste in the Indian context, which divided people as superior touchables and untouchables or upper castes and lower castes. Today's women have begun challenging to oppose the discrimination and are disagreeable to makeover a female space for themselves. The Dalit women have started searching for the root cause of marginalization against them. Women in this pedagogy bring forward their personal identity as women as well as Dalit.*

**Keywords:** Caste, Dalit, Disputes, Gender, Injustices, Nexus, Violence.

### Introduction

Since barely any decades Shudras are known as Dalit. Dalit, a word that refers 'ground' gathers under its umbrella various gatherings that move at the edges. Etymologically, the

word Dalit is gotten from Sanskrit word dalita that signifies 'mistreated'. In Indian socio-social setting 'Shudra' or 'Dalit' are untouchables because of their low level work and the beneath the three classes: Brahman, Kshatriya, and Vaishya. Mahatma Gandhi has given a name 'Harijans' to Shudras, implies individuals of God. Ladies' strengthening assumes an indispensable job in bringing any social change. No general public or country can be viewed as cutting edge without enabled ladies.

Misuse, separation, and brutality are a portion of the key terms related with debilitation. The issue of strengthening of ladies requests for a completely conversation on question of intensity through and through. There is no uncertainty that ladies ought to have the option to appreciate the common opportunity just as Constitutional (lawful) one. It is procedure of self-power, poise, self-assurance, independence, self-decision, sense of pride and self-nobility – bereft of social, political, monetary, social and strict weights. In light of the perspectives on various creators, strengthening could be alluded as access to assets, material prosperity, dynamic force, and the capacity to settle on close to home decisions without pressure. Dynamic reason's for women to change the perspective of system. This is in a manner singular strengthening that is interconnected with the network strengthening, which means transforming oneself at the network level. It implies individuals who practice more noteworthy opportunity in their lives might be greater strengthening. In this manner opportunity and decision are the key recommendations in the journey for strengthening of ladies. One could undoubtedly draw a point that no advancement or progress is conceivable without sexual orientation correspondence in any nation of the world.

#### **a. The Themes of Women Empowerment in Feminism:**

##### **I Untouchables**

India's Untouchables performed profoundly defiling work that no one else needed to do, for example, getting ready bodies for memorial services, treating leathers, and executing rodents or different bugs. Doing anything with dead cows or cowhides was especially unclean in Hinduism. Under both Hindu and Buddhist convictions, employments that included passing defiled the laborers' spirits, making them unfit to blend with others. A gathering of drummers who emerged in southern India called the Parayan (harijans) were viewed as distant in light of the fact that their drumheads were made of dairy animals cover up. Indeed, even people who had no chance to get out (those bound to watchmen who were both Dalits) been not allowed to be not moved by those of higher classes nor raise the places of society. As a result of their uncleanliness according to Hindu and Buddhist divine beings, they were prohibited from numerous spots and exercises, as appointed by their previous existences.

##### **II Dalit Movements**

1. Nair Movement Started under the administration of CV Raman Pillai, K Rama Krishna Pillai and M. Padmanabha Pillai in 1861. Against Brahminic domain, The Malayali Memorial was shaped by Raman Pillai in 1891 and Nair Service Society was set up by Padmanabha Pillai in 1914.
2. Satyashodhak Movement established by Jyotirao Phule in 1873 (Maharashtra). For liberation of low standings, untouchables and widows. Against Brahminic domain.

3. Self-Respect Movement Started under the administration of EV Ramaswami Naicker or Periyar in 1925. Against station framework and one-sided approach of Brahmins. Kudi Arasu diary was begun by Periyar in 1910.

The above mentioned some movements are done for Dalits. Consequently, we can say, the Caste or Dalit Movement in India before autonomy was the resultant of scorn being created by the Brahmanism. As per Brahmanism, Dalit or lower standing is allotted to serve the three Varna which implies Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishyas. They don't have option to take advanced education and were denied social-monetary and political status.

#### **b. The Three Ways of Women Empowerment in Dalit Feminism:**

##### **I Enhance The Self- Respect**

Empower the women around us, and cause them to feel exceptional and solid. Urge our companions to make some noise, ensure they know the estimation of their feelings with the goal that they're never terrified to utilize their voice.

##### **II Bolted Down Pessimism**

Women are continually presented to cynicism as they're regularly held to ridiculous measures of excellence showed in magazines, on TV, and all the more as of late via web-based networking media. Internet based life has opened the floor for men, and now and again other women to circle negative remarks about ladies' appearances. Lift women up by taking a position against negative remarks on the web, at the workplace, in school, and any place we go. Battle the cynicism by advancing body energy, knowledge, and realness. Try not to be hesitant to close down antagonism legitimately and truly, our kindred females will value you.

##### **III Be Straight and Authentic**

The world has been changed by ladies who met the challenge at hand to battle sexism. While it's critical to share your own story, it's similarly as imperative to tune in to other women accounts and encounters. There are huge amounts of extraordinary assets out there to peruse, tune in, and share ladies' accounts. Reese Witherspoon's Hello Sunshine is a media brand that features female stories through film, composed word, sound, and symbolism. Hi Sunshine likewise has an intelligent month to month book club that includes another female writer every month. Find a workable pace skilled ladies, and offer their moving stories with the people throughout your life.

#### **c. The Three Motivations of Women Empowerment in Dalit Feminism**

##### **I Turn Into a Counselor**

Whether you find a Counsellorship program in your community or focus on inspiring your friends and sisters, being a mentor is a great way to inspire young women. Form a group of women and encourage them to participate in an empowerment activity.

##### **II Combat against Chauvinism**

Stand up for ladies' privileges, and be a piece of the procedure! Welcome the rousing people you know to energize together at your nearby ladies' walk, take your insight to the surveys, compose your delegates, and urge other ladies to join the battle for ladies' privileges.

##### **III Help them in Shelter, Education and Placements:**

###### **1. Shelter:**



Ladies' asylums help furnish ladies with fundamental needs and social administrations. Contact our neighborhood ladies' safe house to discover what assets they need, and make a gift. Numerous ladies' safe houses offer business workshops, so consider giving your time and enable ladies by helping them impeccable their meeting aptitudes or work understanding.

## 2. Education

Probably the most ideal ways we can engage young ladies is by supporting their education. At the point when we're furnished with information, we can have any kind of effect. Consider making a commitment to an association that keeps young ladies in school, or discover what supplies a nearby school close to you needs, and make a gift.

## 3. Placements

Show your help for ladies in your locale by putting resources into organizations run by ladies. Know your value and ensure the ladies in your work environment know theirs. Be fearless, and request what you merit, people in the future of working ladies will bless your heart.

## Conclusion

Engaging ladies begins with you. Show your help for the ladies around you, give them they matter, and remind them they're solid. Changing the account for ladies and seeing genuine change is collaboration, so share this rundown with the ladies throughout your life, and urge them to make a move! Show the ladies throughout your life the amount you welcome them by sending a note to say thanks, offering them a commendation, or essentially mentioning to them what they intend to you. . Respect resilient ladies, celebrate various sorts of magnificence, engage ladies with graciousness, and urge ladies to make their desires a reality.

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## Eco-critical Outlook of Subalterns in *Nectar in a Sieve* of Kamala Markandaya and in *The Hungry Tide* of Amitav Ghosh

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### Abstract

*This paper deals with the outlook, thoughts and approach of the subalterns towards ecology and environment that Kamala Markandaya and Amitav Ghosh present in their novels “Nectar in a Sieve” (1954) and “The Hungry Tide” (2004) respectively. An analytical method is used to deal with this study. Kamala Markandaya and Amitav Ghosh are great environmentalists who with a deep sense of ecological perspectives presented the subalterns’ lives that they lead in the lap of nature and laid down their indignant approach towards growing industrialization, deforestation and unethical act of killing animals. This study will show that how subalterns are more sensitive to nature, the more environmentalists and contribute to the protection of nature which is getting devastated day by day. According to Cheryll Glotfelty Eco-criticism studies the relation between the physical environment and the literature. Here, the focus is how these two novels present the relation of the whole environment and the literature through the life and thoughts of marginalized people and areas where Subalterns live. The agrarian culture, Rukmani’s love of nature, birds and animals; Nathan’s love of farming; introduction of tannery and its adverse effects upon the life of the Subaltern are presented in “Nectar in a Sieve” by Kamala Markandaya. Amitav Ghosh, in “The Hungry Tide”, presents the lives of the Subalterns in Sundarbans, the beautiful and healthy atmosphere of Sundarbans, and the attitude of Subalterns towards saving the life of the animals in Sundarbans.*

**Keywords:** Devastation, Ecocriticism, Environment, Nature, Subaltern.

Human beings, non-human beings, trees, different species, non- living things together make nature. Nature is vast and everything is the part of the nature. Everything is depended on the nature. Nature creates, nourishes and brings up each and every part that existed in the universe. A study of relationship between man and nature unveils the existing temperament of the people towards nature. However, the materialistic life style of the people especially the people of the city area are unable to see the darkness that they are incurring upon themselves by devastating the nature. Amitav Ghosh and Kamala Markandaya substantially advocate the earnest need to brood over the growing careless, unethical act of the people towards nature and the people to bring about the vast change in the thinking, attitude and behaviour with respect to the subalterns, the marginalized people, the poor people, the animals, the trees, the

flora and fauna etcetera. The subalterns are the people who are marginalized and are neglected by the so called higher caste of people and the rich people. In the both novels entitled *The Hungry Tide* (2004) and *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) the subalterns are shown to be leading the life in the lap of the nature, they are shown to be loving the animals, flora and fauna, birds, and also their indignation towards growing industrialization and devastation of the nature. This paper deals with the Subaltern's affectionate relationship with the trees, animals, birds and even with the men. It also deals with Subaltern's views about growing industrialization and modernization. In *Nectar in a Sieve* of Kamala Markandaya Nathan, Rukmani, Ira, are marginalized people. Nathan, the marginalized character loves farming and leading a life in the lap of the nature. Rukmani loves birds, animals, farming plants, and expresses her anger towards introduction of the tannery in the village. In *The Hungry Tide*, Fokir, Kusum, Moyna are marginalized people who lead their whole life in Sundarban, in the lap of the nature, with the animals, birds and the trees. They love the nature and contribute indirectly to the protection of the nature. The study is done analytically. The focus will be on how the subalterns present their relationship with the other parts of the nature, their unwillingness towards establishment of the factories and their indignation towards people's destructive minds which think of devastating the nature.

Cheryll Glotfelty defines ecocriticism as “the study of relationship between literature and physical environment.” Ecocriticism is known by various terms as “Green Studies”, “Ecopoetics”, and “Environmental Literary Criticism”. The aim of ecocriticism is to find out environmental concerns and issues presented by the writers in their works. There are many journals as *ISLE (International Studies in Literature and the Environment)*, the *British Green Letters*, and the *Australian Environmental Humanities*. which promote the conservation and preservation of the nature. The term ‘Ecocriticism’ first, is coined by William Rueckert in his essay *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism* in the year 1978. However, Swarnalatha Rangarajan says that “various schools of critical theory since the 1960s have participated in the project of denaturalization of nature, the revision of which is one of the primary aims of ecocriticism.”(P.166). As Swarnalatha Rangarajan mentions in her book entitled *Eco Criticism: Big Ideas and Practical Strategies* the statement of Lawrence as:

In various schools of criticism, such as formalism, psychoanalysis, New Historicism, deconstruction, and even Marxism, it has become obligatory to declare that there is ‘no such thing as nature’ since nature has been reduced to a term within a cultural discourse, a sign within the signifying system. (Lawrence. p. 172)

The Eco-criticism emphasizes on finding disasters, havoc, pollution, famine, drought, extinction of species, growing industrialization, deforestation, relationship between man and nature, global warming, nature as preserver and the destroyer, the life style of the people. The people of the rural area are so closer to the nature and especially the poor, underprivileged and the marginalized people. The Subalterns are the marginalized people. The term “Subaltern” developed by Ranjit Guha is used especially to refer to the peasants who are aloof from the capitalist world. However, currently, this term is used to refer to any kind of person or any kind of group who are considered inferior in rank due to their class, race,



religion and gender. In the novels of Kamala Markandaya and Amitav Ghosh the subalterns figure extensively. Amitav Ghosh explicitly presents the subaltern history in his novels. Kamala Markandaya eminently portrays the subalterns, their lives and their concern with the nature.

Rukmani, the chief character in *Nectar in a Sieve* of Kamala Markandaya, is obsessed with the feelings and emotions of love and fascination towards the birds, plants, and the animals. Rukmani describes astonishingly the environment, the birds and the plants. It seems that she has a close bond with the nature and the words of eulogy come out through her mouth spontaneously which explicitly shows her deep and wholehearted attachment with the nature. She appreciates when she gazes at the refreshed and walking animals, the ringing of the bells that are hung to the bullocks. She also praises the fluttering sound of the birds, sparrows and bulbuls, mynahs, parrots and also the eagle's cry. She even describes the planting of the seeds, watering the plants, watching the birds flying and animals' playing. She likes to do the work of farming. Her love and close kinship with the nature is also found when she names her daughter as Irawaddy, however, Irawaddy is the river of Asia. The family of Rukmani leads a life in poverty. They live in a hut which is thatched, the water seeps in the monsoon season. They in regular intervals repair the thatched hut.

Nathan and Rukmani both repair the roof with fronds of the coconut palm and it is strengthened with the clay. They have very little to lead a life in satisfaction, but they have much for the nature. Nathan is landless, he hires the farming land and toil to earn the livelihood of his family. Ira, Arjun, Thambi, Murugan, Raja, Selvam are the children of Rukmani and Nathan. They have a big family. It is very significant that though being penniless and work strenuously to have a single day meal, they have not forsaken their ethical values, love to the animals, birds, plants and farming. Poor, marginalized Rukmani intuitively visualized the harm and destruction in the introduction of the tannery in the village. The tannery not only destroyed the life of so many people but also destroyed the farming, devastated the nature. Rukmani was against the tannery from the beginning, it destroyed their life. The owner of the tannery bought the land, gave job to the people in the tannery which resulted into young people's negligence towards the farming. The youngsters lost the connectivity with the nature and started their work in the four closed walls which has adverse effect upon the nature.

Arjun and Thambi the sons of Rukmani and Nathan joined the tannery, but later on they had to lose their lives as they died. Rukmani insisted them many times for not doing the work in the tannery, but their fascination towards tannery, means their fascination towards machines and modern ways of working, was hardening their steps towards farming. Due to tannery in the village the prices of the vegetables, groceries hiked, many subalterns borrowed money from the money lenders, many of them have left the farming and joined the tannery. Tannery brought along with it the misery, the havoc in subalterns' lives and devastated the natural environment.

The problems in the life of the subalterns continue to exist though toiling much to detach themselves from them. Two time meal of each day becomes difficult to manage and in



such strenuous and effortful life, the disastrous attribute of the nature that is caused to it by the unnatural act of the people, started to show her anger against the people by way of the wind, the storm and the heavy rain. The big havoc of the nature destroyed the crops of the farmers which caused many problems in their lives. Rukmani lost the vegetables, the shoots and vines were battered and broken, the field of the corn and paddy was lost. Several people became homeless and many of the people died of the lightening. The hut of Kali had been entirely demolished. The trees were uprooted, sticks and the stones dispersed. But among them tannery stood stagnantly without any loss. As Kamala Markandaya writes in *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954)

In the village the storm had left disaster and desolation worse than on our own doorstep. Uprooted trees sprawled their branches in ghastly fashion over streets and houses... The tannery stood, its bricks and cement had held it together despite the raging winds; but workers' huts, of more flimsy construction, had been demolished. (Markandaya, p. 45)

Nature's fury washed away the huts, crops, trees, small plants, paddy of the poor people. The tannery due to its strong construction could not be moved away. But the poor people never detached themselves from the field, birds, animals, crops rather they preferred to live in countryside.

Rukmani cares for the environment. She does not like the people to waste money on the crackers and make sound and air pollution. She is never seen to be liking to set bonfire and to watch the smoke of the bonfire flying towards the clouds and thus pollute the atmosphere. Even, she follows the culture and celebrates the festivals but with the conscience of keeping the atmosphere clean and taking care of animals, birds and the plants. Nathan's love for the farming and attachment with the soil, paddy, vegetables and the crops is implicitly visible in the novel. He never likes his sons to work in the tannery though he knows that they can earn more there. Rather they were more attracted towards the farming when they lost the hired land and went to city where their son Murugan lived for living with their son and doing some works. There, they feel isolated and only remember their village, its atmosphere, soothing life in the lap of the nature.

Kamala Markandaya has presented in a skillful manner the nostalgic feelings of Rukmani and Nathan that they were missing everything of their village in that city. There, they were humiliated by many of the people, were reviled and were expelled from different places by considering them to be the beggars. They could not meet Murugan in the city, for which they had come there. They had decided to return to their village which was very close to their hearts, but they had no money to pay the travelling charges. Therefore, they had to live in the city to earn money. They decided to halt till they earn sufficient amount so that they could pay at least the travelling charges up to their village. They worked hard of breaking the stones and started earning little amount of money in the city. Even, when Nathan was ill, unable to stand, Rukmani continued her working of breaking the hard stones. Their disheartening poverty could not let them rest. Rukmani at last returned to her native village but without Nathan, because Nathan was no more. Nathan died because there was no

house to rest, no money for hospitalization and the medicines, no money to eat healthy food. His wish of leading a life in the village, in the lap of the nature could not be succeeded due to their worse financial condition, and social negligence. Rukmani went back to her village with Puli, the small boy who was orphan.

Amitav Ghosh is the greatest environmentalist who presents his thoughts through his novels. However, his several novels are present the history, especially the history of Asia. The major incidents of the history he portrays in the novels. He emphasizes on how these events have brought about changes in the lives of the people. The novel *The Hungry Tide* (2004) is crucial in handling the issue of ecological imbalance, environmental pollution, and the social issues particularly related with the local people who are poor, marginalized and neglected. The novel is set in Sundarbans island. This novel is divided into two parts as ‘The Ebb: Bhata’ and ‘The Flood Jowar’ The island is called Sundarbans because of the mangroves plants which look attractively beautiful. From the word “Sundari” the word Sundarbans is formed. The island is very beautiful. There are tigers, snakes, crocodiles, the flow of water, thick bushes. This area has two features as beauty and danger. He blends the life of the human and non-human beings in this novel. The residents of the island are marginalized people, the subalterns, who are very poor and landless. However, these people have come from different regions as East Bengal, Orissa etcetera.

The region of Sundarbans is also called “the tide country” where many refugees are settled, who were marginalized and were harassed by high class of people in the city areas. The people, their culture and the nature are main concern of this novel. In this novel, there are the characters like Kanai Dutt, the translator; Piyali Roy, the cetologist, who comes in the tide country for her research on Orcaella, the dolphins; Fokir, the fisherman, though, being illiterate he possesses huge knowledge about environment and that area; Nilima, known as “Mashima”; Nirmal who has written a letter. In this novel, Amitav Ghosh has shown the subalterns’ honesty, their strength of facing the dangers, their attachment towards the nature, as trees, animals, plants, birds, the river. However, the region of Sundarban is dangerous to live because of the assault of the tigers, crocodiles; the life may fall in danger at any time on this island. But Fokir, the subaltern, likes to live there on the water, in the mangroves plants, in the thick forest; his attachment with this natural world is real life source for him.

Fokir represents the subalterns, who not only care for the nature but also respect the people. He helps Piyali Roy in her research work by taking her on the water and describing many natural things, giving knowledge about the fishes, dolphins, mangroves trees, the dangers of tiger. Fokir and Piyali Roy show their love for the birds and the tiger who is gazing them with the purpose to attack upon them. Fokir and Piyali Roy sit at the safe place to save themselves from the cyclone; at that time they gaze the birds and feel deep attachment and love for them and even when they see the tiger, who is furiously gazing them to attack upon them, Fokir and Piyali feel also sense of deep attachment and love for the tiger. This is true love for the animals and the birds, even when they are caught in a dangerous situation their hearts feel affectionate kinship with the tigers, birds and the surroundings. However,





Fokir sacrifices his life to rescue Piyali Roy from the danger and thus this shows his humanitarian approach.

Amitav Ghosh has shown in the novel *The Hungry Tide* (2004) that, how the subalterns are leading their lives in Sundarbans, their effortful ways of life, their humiliation, their poverty and also their strength, honesty and caliber are shown in this novel. There is the danger of the cyclone, nature's fury, direct attack by the tigers, danger from crocodiles and the snakes. Amitav Ghosh writes that every year several people have lost their lives due to the attack by the tigers, the crocodiles and biting by the snakes. Such hazardous assault by tigers, tidal floods, cyclones make the life of the poor people very hard to live. There is constant clash between the man and the nature as conflict between man and aquatic and wild animals, between man and cyclone, floods. This has hazardous effect upon the life of the subalterns which make their life dangerous, strenuous and hard to live. It was the purpose of Amitav Ghosh to show the world how dangerous life the subalterns are living in the Sundarbans, but yet they are so close to the nature that because of their attachment with the nature and their strength they can face any problems.

Fokir, Moyna, Kusum, the subalterns, have been shown totally different from the people of city area as Piyali, Kanai Dutt. Fokir, having the knowledge of marine life seems to be backward before Piyali Roy, Kanai Dutt. Fokir, Moyna, Kusum are local, poor, neglected and underprivileged, but cultured. Piyali Roy and Kanai Dutt are educated person, using new technology as mobile, GPS. However, Piyali Roy needs his help to continue her research work. Though, Kanai Dutt worked for her as translator but further he could not help her in research due to his lack of the knowledge of the marine life. The diary, which is written by Nirmal, and to read this Kanai Dutt comes to Lusibari from Delhi, consists about Kusum and Fokir. The subalterns are the real heroes of Sundarbans who lead their lives in such area which is filled with the beauty of the mangrove, rivers, different dolphins, fishes, different birds and different animals but other side of this area is hazardous and dangerous to live. As Amitav Ghosh writes in *The Hungry Tide*:

The green fields that quilted the island were dotted with clusters of mud huts and crossed by many well-trodden pathways. The broadest of these paths were even paved with bricks and shaded with rows of casuarina trees. (Ghosh, p. 59)

The technology is being developed in the world, the luxurious life, the different kind of facilities, growing educational institutions have brought about huge change in the life style of the people throughout the world. But, the subalterns are yet poor, underprivileged and neglected. They are far away from the luxurious life, technology, higher education and different kind of facilities. Rather, they are facing a number of problems. Their efforts for the survival are presented in the novels of Amitav Ghosh. Along with the efforts which they make for the survival they cherish the love for the plants, trees, animals, birds, soil and directly or indirectly protect the nature. Thus, they contribute to the worldwide issue of saving the nature as it is being devastated and destructed by the people in the name of the development. Their life teaches and motivates the people to have humanitarian approach, to love to the animals, birds, trees, and to protect the nature.



The thought of bringing about worldwide revolution for the conservation, preservation and protection of the nature, Amitav Ghosh and Kamala Markandaya have evidently and effectively brought into action by presenting the actions, attitude, attribute and behaviour of the people towards nature. They urge the readers through their writings to feel deep sense of love for the nature. Both the novels as Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* and Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* present the life of the subalterns as strenuous, difficult, miserable, and challenging at one side and at other side it is presented as natural life, which they are leading in the lap of the nature and directly or indirectly are contributing to the preservation, conservation and the protection of the nature. Rukmani, Nathan are representatives of the subalterns who in their poverty, and miserable life feel deep attachment for the nature, though the nature's fury that is shown in the form of the storm that destroyed their huts, and crops. Rukmani loves the plants, birds, animals, trees, mountains and farming without any negative approach towards nature though a number of financial and domestic problems come in their life. They face various adversities and simultaneously they cherish love for the nature in their hearts and all these make subalterns the real heroes, who preserve, conserve and protect the nature with their direct or indirect deeds, attitude and thoughts. In *The Hungry Tide* (2004) the global and the locals are picturized forming the relationship among such figures. Fokir, the subaltern, shows his honesty, affection towards the human being as well as towards non-human beings. The relationship between Piyali Roy, the American girl and Fokir, the local man built up new aspect by keeping aside the barriers of the norms of the caste and creed. The Island Sundarbans has two sides, first it is dangerous to live owing to the attack of the wild animals, nature's fury as flood and cyclone; second it is very beautiful and fascinating.

Fokir, Moyna, Kusum represent the subalterns who after facing the problems in their life maintain the balance of the nature and cherish humanitarian approach, they love both human and the non-human beings. But the contrary thing has been found as the politics does not let the subalterns to lead their life in the lap of the nature. The efforts are being made to keep the subalterns away from these beautiful natural areas as Morichjhampi, which is tiger reserve place and other places of Sundarban Island. Thus, the novels *The Hungry Tide* and *Nectar in a Sieve* deal with ecological as well social issues.

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## Metamorphosis of Sudha and Anju in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Vine Of Desire*

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### Abstract

*Diasporic Literature is a very vast concept and an umbrella term that includes in it all those literary works written by the authors outside their native country, but these works are related to native culture and background. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is one of the most impressive and dynamic voices among the writers of Indian Diasporic Literature. As an Indian immigrant writer, Divakaruni stands firmly in the native tradition, depicting the change of diasporic experiences of women in her novels. The fiction of Divakaruni is related directly to the twentieth-century revolutions of community and individuals. Divakaruni's "The Vine of Desire" illustrates the female protagonists' struggle for identity, their bitter experiences in a foreign land which transforms their life from dependence to independence. They finally emerge as self-assertive individuals. This paper focuses on the process of attaining the metamorphosis of the two main characters, Sudha and Anju in a foreign country.*

**Keywords:** Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Diasporic experience, Identity, Independence.

A blow of fresh air is fanning in the scenery of modern literature with the arrival of globalization. Diaspora is a global sensation which shows the communities of displaced or relocated people who move from their homelands to new lands for social, political or economic reasons. 'Diaspora' means 'to scatter' or 'dispersion'. Diaspora is a main subject to be connected with the rootless, isolated, dislocated immigrants from their native homeland. Immigration has turn into a significant stage in human development. As the immigrants are able to take up the best of both native and alien, they develop into international citizens.

Most of the Diasporas deliberately want to migrate to a foreign country of their choice, with the hope of living there. They migrate to live a happy life, yet in reality they fight a lot for survival. The diasporic person is at home neither in the West nor in India and is thus 'unhomed' (qtd in Bharathi 4) in the most important sense of the term. Thus the concept and interpretation of 'home' become important in all kinds of diasporic writing.

The observable fact of immigration of Indian people to the United States of America and other countries, their status there, and their nostalgic feelings for the mother country as



well as their isolation is the dominant subject treated by diaspora writers. In the same way, the literature of the Indian Diaspora is “that body of writing in English produced by persons who identify themselves as of Indian heritage who are living outside the Mother India in such places as Australia, Canada, United States, Africa and Britain” (qtd in Jha 7).

The Literature of the Indian Diaspora is deeply rooted in the environmental culture and cultural ideology. It is an independent discipline that has many male and female writers as its patrons. The Diasporic Indian artistic writers such as V.S.Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Bharati Mukherjee, Anita Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri, etc are interested in aiming the real characters of Indian-born men and women, their society and customary life.

In the Post Modernism, Diaspora writing has become popular and the diasporic women writers have special place in Indian Diasporic writings. One of the most significant woman writers of Indian diaspora literature who brilliantly portrays femininity in its liveliness is Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. After Salman Rushdie, Divakaruni emerges on the literary scene with a post-colonial diasporic identity. Her position as a South Asian writer in English is diverse and well recognized. Divakaruni immigrated to America and came into spotlight as a female writer in diasporic Indian English Literature.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a well-known and prominent among youth; an Indian-American was born in Kolkata on 29 July 1956 and spent the first nineteen years of her life in India. She has graduated from the University of Calcutta in 1976 and received Masters and Ph.D. in English from the University of California. She held many different jobs to pay for education, including babysitting, selling merchandise in an Indian Boutique, slicing bread at a bakery, and washing instruments in a science lab.

Indian American writer Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a renowned author, poet, activist and teacher. Her works include three volumes of poetry, two collections of short stories, anthologies and a children’s book to her credit. Her novels comprise *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *The Vine of Desire* (2002), *Queen of Dreams* (2004), *The Palace of Illusions: A Novel* (2008), *One Amazing Thing* (2010), *Oleander Girl* (2013), *Before We Visit the Goddess* (2016), *The forest of Enchantments* (2019).

Divakaruni’s work has been published in over 50 magazines, including the *Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker*, and her writing has been included in over 50 anthologies. Her books have been translated into 29 languages. Most of her works have been made into films and plays. She has won several awards, including American Book Award and Light of India Prize. She teaches Creative Writing at the University of Houston. In 2015, she has been included by the *Economic Times* in the ‘Twenty Most Influential Global Indian Women.’

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has her identity patented in a foreign land but her origin and connections are firmly rooted in India. She has insisted on being read not as an Indian or emigrant writer but as an immigrant writer. Her books are based both in India and in U.S and consistently mark the lives and troubles of women. The fiction of Divakaruni is related directly with the twentieth century transformations of community and individuals. She is



concerned with crossing over from one culture to another without compromising either, negotiating new boundaries and remaking themselves.

Divakaruni has attempted to create an inclusive picture of South Asian family life. She is at her best exploring the themes of love, friendship, assimilation, self-analysis and discovery: “involved in the process of social transformation” (qtd in Bharathi 19). Her novels have great significance in the present age. The immigrant writer, Divakaruni reevaluates the role of Indian woman in her novels. In this novel, *The Vine of Desire* Divakaruni brightly predicted her women protagonist transformed to new icons of independence by taking up the problems faced as the Indian immigrants in America. This article deals with the theme of woman’s empowerment and their desire for independency, which make them to break the restrained boundaries of the society. This metamorphosis makes them emerge as a New Woman from Interdependence to Independence. This is brilliantly portrayed in the novel *The Vine of Desire* through the characters of Sudha and Anju.

In Divakaruni’s fiction, sisterhood is always strongly embedded, inborn relationship that brings people together. This especially shown in “The Ultrasound” in her short story collection *Arranged Marriage* and later enlarged into the novel *Sister of My Heart* and *The Vine of Desire*. To know about the novel, *The Vine of Desire*, one must know about the previous novel, *Sister of My Heart* (1999). The title *Sister of My Heart* itself speaks of the emotional ties between two women. The novel consists of two cousins- Anju and Sudha, their mothers- Gouri, Nalini and Pishi their widowed aunt. Anju and Sudha are cousins belonging to the same patrilineal family who consider one another as the sister of their hearts.

Anju and Sudha are very different in appearance, personality and attainment, and grow up together under similar yet very different conditions. Anju and Sudha from their entry to girlhood relish a set of new values and accompanying their dreams to their urge for freedom, their desire for adventurous experiences and their feeling to have a stronger experience of the world beyond the overprotected home. Sudha, the more beautiful than her cousin Anju, is quite and submissive while Anju is the rebellious one. The differences in their outlook and manner, instead of making them apart, pull them together to help each other in their times of need. Only the marriage separated them from one another.

Marriage has brought not only physical separation but also emotional separation for them. Anju moves to California with her charming husband Sunil, where, she becomes free, performing outdoor works on her own, learns her favorite subject in college. But still the unhappiness in her life makes her think that it’s not what she imagined about American life would be. Here, Sudha settles in Calcutta by marrying a wealthy man Ramesh. She becomes submissive wife and does household chores under the control of her dominant mother-in-law.

Life brings them to the same stage when they both become pregnant. Sudha’s mother-in-law insists Sudha to abort her child because she wants to have a boy baby. However Sudha decides to keep the child. So she is forced to run away from her husband’s house in order to guard her child. Here in America, Anju is upset over her miscarriage. Sudha is ready to go to America to take care of her beloved sister Anju. Sudha divorces her husband and prepared to leave India. Ashok, her first love approaches Sudha to come and live with them. Sudha



refuses his proposal and leaves India with her daughter Dayita and go to America to live with her sister Anju. *Sister of My Heart* ends when Sudha lands on American airport and the two adored sisters are united again.

*The Vine of Desire* is a sequel to *Sister of My Heart* published in 2002. It is a novel of strength and sensitivity and continues the story of Anju and Sudha, the two cousins of the earlier book. The two young women now live in America. *The Vine of Desire* opens with Anju's miscarriage; this really affects her mind and her relationship with Sunil. The reunion gives Anju the stamina to live on after her personal tragedy. Sudha also rises the confident of giving a life of herself and for her baby in spite of her lonely condition.

Sudha's arrival in the novel, *The Vine of Desire* seems balanced for a standard flight of adultery, clash of allegiance and a shocking breakdown of relationships. The novel picks up where Sudha, now a divorcee comes to America to visit Anju and her husband Sunil, who has an early crush on Sudha. The happy reunion of the two sisters is again stained by Sunil's passionate feelings for Sudha and by Sudha's surrender to his desire.

The novel, *The Vine of Desire* is divided into two parts. The first part entitled, 'Subterranean Truths' describes the life of the two sisters in America after Sudha's arrival. The second part of the novel named 'Remembrance and Forgetting' opens out Sudha's new journey as a caretaker of an ailing old Bengali man, Mr. Sen in Berkeley and her decision to return to Bengal with him to a small place, Jalpaiguri in Bengal.

After her marriage, Anju came to America who felt some trouble to adjust with the American culture. The sense of longing is often seen among the displaced people in most of the diaspora writings. In *The Namesake*, *Brick Lane*, *An American Brat* and *The Vine of Desire*, one can find women characters leave their home to foreign countries after their marriage in order to settle in a new land with their husbands. Anju's isolation over her miscarriage exposes nostalgia caused due to immigration.

Divakaruni focuses on Anju's insecurities after the miscarriage of the child. Despite Anju's dissatisfaction of motherhood gets to tie up in the beauty and innocence of Dayita. Anju easily gets attached to Dayita and Dayita is also fond of her. Slowly, Anju gains her strength after her sister Sudha's care and support. With Sudha's appearance in the edge of Anju's marital life, a new web of personal relationship is to be constructed. Everyday seeing Sudha in his house tempts Sunil to lose his consciousness that he is Anju's husband. He even kissed Sudha when she was sleeping with Dayita. Sudha became annoyed and went away.

Sudha is a woman who walks out of her in-laws house and begins a fresh new life in America with her daughter. In India, she faces many restrictions where in America she does not face any restrains. Even in India, nobody would accept a woman like her, who dares to smash the rules and who wanted to live on her own with her daughter. Chitra Banerjee depicts the outstanding characters and every character takes a hope in an alien country; she says "No journey is commonplace. Each person's journey is unique and changes that person in a special way. I hope I am able to show that through my different characters". (qtd in Swamy 7)



In America, women are free and they emancipated themselves capable of working, living, having fun, doing things unbelievable for the Indians. The scene of the women flying in glides in the novel *The Vine of Desire* is the best example of this. Anju and Sudha are very excited to see women who are flying in the glides and admire their liberated spirit. Sudha admires them. She thinks, “Are such things possible? To be so free of gravity, so deliciously loosened from earth?” (VD 41). Immigrants always make themselves fine and free from the hardships and so Sudha came to America for her better life.

The protagonist, Sudha represents transformation in motion, from submissive wife to liberal woman to resist on her own to reject a home to save her daughter. She transforms herself from traditional passive women to modern independent women. Getting out of the house, Sudha emerged herself as a feminist woman. Feminism is a movement that gained importance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which fights for cultural roles and socio-political rights of women. Apart from the struggle for their rights, they begin to create their own identity in society. They are revealing themselves as strong and intelligent. Because of this change, they begin to establish themselves as one of the major parts of the society. The women who are having the above traits can be called as New Women.

Unlike typical Victorian woman, the New Woman is not habituated to self sacrifice. She picks up her career for a living and attains self fulfillment and independence. As Sangeetha Jain affirms, “There was a sudden change in the outlook of women towards themselves and society. Capturing this transformation of women’s ideas about themselves, critics and journalists coined the term New Woman which reflected a diversion from self-sacrificing old woman” (Jain 21). The early example of the new women in fiction includes Nora in Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, a woman who leaves her husband to chase her own desire. In the novel *The Vine of Desire*, Sudha leaves her husband to live her life independently with her daughter.

At first, Sudha feels bored about her life in America as she uses all the time cleaning Anju’s home and cooking other than taking care of her daughter. So Sudha gets some relaxation out of the house, spending some time in park near Anju’s house where Dayita happily played with sand. In park, Sudha tried to mix with the other American ladies but they are not ready to talk with her and there she felt an immigrant sensibility. But she meets a woman named Sara in a park who is young Indian immigrant, leading an unknown and lively life in America. Meeting Sara is a turning point in Sudha’s life.

It is from Sara that Sudha learns of being free and independent and develops a “don’t care” attitude towards the comments of this world. Sudha admires Sara’s view of life and her attitude to life has shocked Sudha and wonders: “Where did this girl from Indian learn such recklessness? Who taught her to care so little for what people might think?” (VD 84). Sudha’s interaction with Sara makes her think of a job for herself so that she can be independent. Sudha seeks a new job through Sara who tells her that she will inform it to a woman named Lupe, the job facilitator.

Sara promised her “entry into the real American life and more importantly- escape from herself” (VD 92). The idea of having something of her own and being economically free

and independent gives an enormous enjoyment to Indian immigrant woman. However, Sudha has her own theory of life. She has her own reasons for the refusal to Ashok and she declares, “I turned him down because I didn’t want him to have to take care of me,” Sudha said, “I wanted to be independent. And it seemed like America was the best place for that.” (VD 93)

Sudha gets fascinated by the American proverb, “Live for Yourself”. She wonders: “Especially since I came here. Everywhere I turn in America, they say, Life for yourself” (VD 177). Sudha knows that her arrival causes the distance between her sister Anju and her husband Sunil. She felt the heavy ambience in Anju’s house. They don’t talk much after Anju’s miscarriage. Sunil kindles his relationship with Dayita who is comfortably close with him. As an alternative for her crisis with Sunil, Lalit appears in her life. Lalit is an Americanized Indian surgeon, become friend with Sudha. Sudha looks happy and enjoys Lalit’s company who often makes fun. Anju delights to see Sudha’s happiness who gets over from her past. But Sunil does not like this intimacy between Sudha and Lalit.

In the fear of losing Sudha, he reveals his love for her. He wants to marry Sudha and he is ready to ask for a divorce from Anju. If marriage is a social compulsion, love is anxious with the personal completion. Though Sudha is not pleased about Sunil’s decision, she for a while discovers the complete fulfillment of her hinder sexual and emotional desires. In a weak moment, she provides him his physical desire.

Sudha surrenders to the call of her flesh. She has deceived Anju’s trust. She is not able to guard it. She feels guilty for her behavior. She is unable to take the fact that she got into physical relationship with her sister’s husband. So she decides to leave Anju and Sunil’s house immediately. She dialed Lupe, the woman who offers job and leaves Anju and Sunil after writing a letter for both.

Sudha asserts herself independently. She appears as a woman of individual strength. Among the various complexities that confront her, she grabs the opportunity to search for a job. She attempts to make development in her own way. Sudha’s interaction with Lupe, taught her to be brave and to deal with the challenges of life. Lupe has taught her not to be emotional and attached to any person or thing. Meeting with Sara and Lupe, Sudha has transformed and even demolished the principles that she had kept so far in her life. Before that Sudha has trusted in the attitude of favorable to everyone in her life. She gratified Anju and made sacrifices for her; she gratified her ‘mothers’ and in-laws who gave her problems in her life. She gratified Sunil and it gave the turning point in her life. She had to discard all those who were close to her heart, her ideals, and her dreams as well. Sudha took the job of taking care of an ailing old man in one Indian family.

In spite of Sudha’s physical sufferings, she confirms her boundless ambition and adventurous spirit of a postmodern woman. Through Sudha, Chitra Banerjee presents a new woman who is neither surrendering nor compromising. As exactly said by Neeru Tandon, “She (a new woman) is new in the dimension of time by being a rebel against the general current of the patriarchal society and in exploring her true potential, along with the struggle to fulfill her urges and needs” (Tandon 127). New women’s eager for job make her to stand as economically free independent women. Sudha symbolizes this new woman.



Chitra Banerjee makes excellent depiction of an Indian immigrant woman. Sudha who chooses to accept the job as nurse takes care of an old man. On the other hand, the author eminently portrays one of the protagonists, Anju's dauntlessness when she knows about her messed life. Anju transforms herself as a woman of independent strength. After knowing the departure of Sudha, Anju asks Sunil what he had done to Sudha which makes her leave the house. Sunil informs Anju that they won't be able to live together because he loves Sudha and does not further want to ruin both their lives.

Anju is not like Sudha who doesn't like definite aspects of her native culture but Anju's view is quite balanced about Indian and American culture. Divakaruni illustrates the inner struggle of Anju who finally has to embrace the fact that life offers to her. Anju stands boldly and signs the divorce papers. After the separation, Anju declines every possible help from Sunil. In this way, Chitra Banerjee shows the liberal American notion of feminism that promotes Indian women to fight for liberty and independence.

Anju informs Sunil not to contact her and refuses Sunil's help that he has offered. This proves Anju's dauntlessness attitude which she gives priority to her self-determination, free will and independency, instead of need and defensive shield. Anju attempts to create her own identity, a place for herself in the splendor of America which she discovers hard to break. Chitra Banerjee justifies Stuart Hall's statement: "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, though transformation and difference" (Hall 235).

Sudha accepts the job of nursing an ailing man which makes her to stand on her feet to earn money on her own: "Most important of all, for the first time in her life, she has her own money. She's finally starting her new life in America" (VD 221). She starts believing that she owes something to herself. Being confident on her own strength, Sudha opts to lead a significant life of her own and for her daughter.

Initially, Sudha does not cop up with the old man. He does not want anyone to come near him. Sudha senses that the old man is not leading his life happily because he lives in an alien, "he can't stand to be here. In this bed, in this house, in this country, all of which is alien to him" (VD 278). Sudha believes that Mr. Sen would get healthier only if he is taken to his home land. She also wants to return to India, she decides to pick up an unknown area where nobody knows her to avoid the tortures of both past and present. She says, "In a new part of India, where no one knows me. Without the weight of old memories" (VD 321). The old man is extremely happy to leave the foreign land and hope of returning to his hometown.

Sudha goes through an unexpected twist in her life which metamorphoses her courageous woman who tackles her problems in front of her. This transformation of Sudha also gives the old man the source for his survival. In this way she believes she will bring her daughter Dayita properly: "I want to be able to send her to a really good school. And put away enough in savings so I never have to depend on anyone again" (VD 321). Like New Women, Sudha believes in having a career to establish their worth and independence. Thus Sudha gets rid of her traditional conservative role of weak female and emerges as a New Women.

Chitra Banerjee considers on the issue of immigration and acculturation on the harsh grounds of nationality. Sudha is ready to leave America. This country of hopes and ambitions gave her nothing in a way she wanted; instead it makes her strong to stand on her own. It transforms her from interdependence to independence and she was happy about it.

Ashok suddenly visits to America to take Sudha back with him to India and doesn't want her to continue her job. His concern makes Sudha angry and scolds him: "I don't like people making high-handed decisions without consulting me" (VD 335). Through this, Sudha confirmed that she has completely emerged as an independent woman. America moulds Sudha into a strong and independent woman.

On the other hand, Anju transforms and nurtures by taking up the opportunities that America offers to her. After her separation from her husband Sunil, she makes her mind clearly never to go back to him. She regularly goes to college and takes up the class and leads her life independently without depending on others. She wants to get rid of the past that all things done to her. She even cuts her hair and loses her weight which astonishes Sudha when she meets her.

As her name Anju, which implies 'a good woman who offers up her life for others', Anju forgives her husband Sunil and her sister Sudha who deceived her. Anju and Sudha share their life incidents after their separation. Anju accepts her life as it is and there she comes out as a new independent woman after having come out of all the difficulty in her life. The novel ends with Anju's metaphysical assertion of liberty and independent life. Anju says: "You won't believe it, Sudha. I've learned to fly" (VD 368). This is the transformation in Anju, a truly independent woman whose self is formed through compromises, conflicts and combination with the American and Indian values. Thus, two Indian immigrant women finally emerged as independent women through their survival in America illuminates them to understand that life can never be regularly smooth.

*The Vine of Desire* probes the themes of love, friendship, self-analysis and discovery and it is also the tale of ardor, jealousy and emancipation. Anju and Sudha are bothered by the disaster in their lives, the impact of love-triangles. All of these add to the breakdown of these sisters and steadily their final emancipation to freedom and independence. Both the sisters, Anju and Sudha seek self respect and self discovery in their life. The two sisters travel in their own ways in order to create their identities.

After a period of time they discover each other and find their close ties once again. Thus Chitra Banerjee presenting the strong female characters in her novels would be the role model for the real world women. Her female protagonists give an impact on the real world women to live economically independent without leaning on others. They can learn something from New Woman characters. For instance, Sudha teaches the reader how to live a life independently even the society stands against her. Even Anju teaches how to be bold and give priority to the self-esteem in critical situation of life. Both the heroines teach how to live independently as self-assertive individual women without depending on others.

The novel, *The Vine of Desire*, both sisters, Sudha and Anju find out that they cannot allow themselves of being interdependent on men. So they search for a life of independence.



Both Anju and Sudha move themselves from interdependence to independence by breaking the restrained boundaries of society. So the sisters decide to lead their life independently. This novel, *The Vine of Desire* analyzes the sisters' struggle highly in the revelation of immigrant feminine experience. Through her writings, Chitra Banerjee represents Indian women who break down the stereotypes and this metamorphosis emerge them as New Women. The author recognizes the strength of mentality and potential of the twenty-first century women who wish to get liberty and live an independent life.

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